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THE INDEPENDENT

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

Saturday 25 April 1998 70p (IR 70p) No 3,594

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Today's news

Russia elects PM at last

SERGEI Kirienko, a 35-year-old technocrat with little political experience, yesterday became Russia's Prime Minister, ending a confrontation between Kremlin and parliament that plunged the country into a month-long limbo. Boris Yeltsin's protégé was confirmed in his job by a comfortable margin after the State Duma, or lower house, caved in on its third and final vote on his nomination. The new premier will present his line-up for a new cabinet to the President next Tuesday; the new government is expected to begin work by the end of next week. A triumph for Mr Yeltsin, who precipitated the crisis by sacking the government on 23 March, was on television to declare the result a victory for "reason over emotion".

Full-story page 11

Grampian police chief resigns

Chief Constable Ian Oliver, the beleaguered head of the Aberdeen-based Grampian police force, resigned last night following pressure over the force's mishandling of the murder of nine-year-old Scott Simpson by a well-known paedophile.

Olympic chief in royal rejection

THE mastermind of the millennium Sydney Olympics provoked outrage yesterday by claiming that Australians do not want the Queen to open the games.

Construction experts roundly condemned the comments by John Coates, saying Australia was acting like a "tough teenager" in its relations with Britain. Mr Coates, who is co-ordinating the Sydney Games in 2000, said the decision on who should open the millennium olympiad should reflect the current views of Australians.

Set-piece Labour

NEW card-carrying Labour members should be warned - they have been nominated for a role in a sketch written by party managers. Ministers and MPs have been home with a proposed "script" suggesting how they should contact members of the party who joined before the election and whose membership needs renewal. Page 6

Boycott quits 'Indy'

THE EXPRESS titles have poached Rosie Boycott, editor of *The Independent* and *Independent on Sunday*, to create a "new mid-market newspaper". Andrew Marr, editor-in-chief of the two titles, has temporarily resumed the editor's chair until new appointments are made. Page 2

Business news

Economy slows

INFLATION "slows" on the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee were given further ammunition against hawks yesterday. Consumer price figures showed the economy grew in the first quarter of this year by 0.4 per cent, the lowest rate since mid-1995. Economists do not now expect interest rates to move this month. Page 24

Argos taken over

ARGOS, the catalogue retailer, was taken over yesterday after it lost a fiercely contested takeover bid launched by Great Universal Stores, Britain's largest home shopping company. GUS, whose interests include the Kay's catalogue and the Barberry clothing brand, is paying £1.9bn for Argos, which has 439 stores in Britain and a small operation in Holland. Report, page 24

Sports news

Hill revs himself up

DAMON HILL, Britain's former F1 champion, admitted that he needs to improve on his disappointing performances this season. As he prepared for tomorrow's San Marino Grand Prix, he said he had developed a healthy respect for his Jordan colleague, Ralf Schumacher, who has outpaced him in all three qualifying sessions so far. Time Off, page 26



Key players: Chess pieces by the Belfast artist Antoni Brennan caricature Northern Ireland's leading political figures. A set costs £1,500

Photograph: Brian Harris

Loyalist gunmen back the peace deal

LOYALIST paramilitaries last night threw their weight behind the Northern Ireland peace agreement and called for a "Yes" vote in the referendum next month.

The endorsement by the Ulster Defence Association and Ulster Freedom Fighters came on the eve of the annual conference of their political representatives, the Ulster Democratic Party, at which leader Gary McMichael is due to make a strong call to back the agreement.

Sinn Féin chairman Martin McGuinness yesterday met with IRA inmates at the Maze Prison to hear their opinion on the deal.

It will be taken to a Sinn Féin conference in mid-May at which the party will decide its position on the agreement. They are expected to call for a "Yes" vote in the referendum on both sides of the border.

Trimble denial, page 4

Vigilantes target child-killers

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

PROBATION chiefs warned last night that a wave of vigilante attacks and the public "outing" of sex offenders was wrecking efforts to monitor paedophiles.

The Association of Chief Officers of Probation issued a report detailing 40 serious incidents from around the country where public disorder has hampered attempts to keep sex offenders under supervision.

The report was issued as police and anti-paedophile groups yesterday appealed for calm after rioters attacked a police station in Bristol where they believed the

child-killer Sidney Cooke was being held.

Petrol bombs and bricks were thrown at the station, in the Knowle West area of the city, leaving 46 police officers injured. Two were concussed by flying missiles and one was scalded by burning petrol.

Police said a "rent-a-mob" gang of around 60 rioters, including children as young as eight who threw bricks, had hijacked a peaceful protest by around 300 people. A dozen people were arrested.

Gill Mackenzie, vice-chairwoman of the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, said that many of the serious incidents re-

ferred to in the report had happened in the last few months. "This gives us firm evidence that real damage is being done to innocent children and adults by people taking the law into their own hands," she said.

"Existing vital and effective supervision and surveillance operations are being destroyed."

Among the incidents detailed in the report were:

■ The abandonment of police surveillance of a high-risk offender in the Midlands after local press identified and contacted him.

■ A local newspaper in the North of England named and pictured a convicted sex offender. Another man living in the same block of flats was mistaken for him and given a severe beating.

■ An offender under 24-hour police surveillance in the North was "outed" by a tabloid newspaper. He moved and probation staff managed to track him when he began offering to babysit. But he moved again and is now untraceable.

■ Photographs of an offender were put up around local schools in Wales. He was being monitored by police and probation but quickly disappeared.

■ A local newspaper in the North of England named and pictured a convicted sex offender. Another man living in the same block of flats was mistaken for him and given a severe beating.

■ An offender in the South-west

had to be moved after vigilantes threatened to nail him to a tree.

Home Office minister Alan Michael yesterday insisted that Cooke was under constant supervision by Avon and Somerset police and could pose no threat.

"The Chief Constable has made that absolutely clear. Now, it's that assurance that the public need - it's certainly the assurance that as a parent and grandparent I would look for," he said.

Cooke was released from jail earlier this month after serving nine years for the manslaughter of teenager Jason Swift. Avon and Somerset police have refused to say where they are holding the killer,

who was moved to the area from London a week ago. Rumours have prompted demonstrations outside police stations in Yeovil, Bridgwater and Minehead in Somerset as well as Bristol.

People living near the scene of last night's riot condemned those responsible for the violence.

Jane Thomas, 34, said: "This was supposed to be a peaceful demonstration but it was taken over by a mindless minority of idiots."

"They have achieved nothing and it makes me very angry to think we are all going to be seen as rioters when all we wanted to do was demonstrate against this man."



Traffic wardens to get powers similar to police

By Jason Bannister
Crime Correspondent

THE motorist's ultimate nightmare could soon become reality - traffic wardens with real power.

For years the world's "most hated profession" has had to make do with terrorising stationary vehicles and their owners, but police chiefs and the Home Office are currently considering letting them loose on moving traffic.

Along with the extra powers to pull over motorists, the traffic wardens are expected to suffer an even greater amount of verbal and physical abuse.

There are also expected to be fresh calls for the country's several thousand "yellow perils" to be fitted with bullet and stab-proof amour.

Some wardens in Cardiff have already been issued with flak-jackets which can withstand the blast of a .357 magnum handgun at close range.

Under the proposals, police-employed wardens, or "little Hitlers" as they are sometimes nicknamed, would be allowed to stop motorists and fine them if they were caught driving in bus lanes, illegally entering box junctions or endangering pedestrians at zebra crossings.

Risky business: Wardens have been shot at, run over, punched

They could also be allowed to pull over vehicles and have them tested by anti-pollution officers.

At present only police officers have the power to stop a moving vehicle.

Only wardens employed by the police rather than council ticket inspectors would be affected.

The plans were revealed yesterday by Paul Manning, chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers' traffic committee.

He said the association was in discussion with ministers about the issue. He argued that the changes would free officers for more important work.

He added that a "risk assessment" would have to be carried out to consider whether body armour was needed.

In the past three years wardens in Wiltshire and Wiltshire have been shot with air rifles. Others have been dragged behind cars, run over and punched.

Fewer than half think Labour is trustworthy

By John Rentoul

A YEAR after the election, fewer than half the electorate think the Labour government is "honest and trustworthy", according to an opinion poll carried out for *The Independent* by Harris Research.

Only 49 per cent said the Government has, "on balance, been honest and trustworthy", while 39 per cent said it had not. This marks a change since last June, when 78 per cent described the new administration as honest in an identically worded Gallup poll question.

Today's anniversary poll suggests that the adverse publicity attracted by the refurbishment of the Lord Chancellor's apartments and the break-up of the Foreign Secretary's marriage have hurt the image of the Government, but that the Prime Minister has emerged unscathed.

Harris asked voters to distinguish between Mr Blair and other ministers on the issue of whether they "understand the problems of ordinary people". Nearly half the sample, 46 per cent, agreed that "Mr Blair understands the problems of ordinary people but some of his ministers do not". Smaller numbers (20 per cent) thought that both Mr Blair and his ministers understood their problems, or that neither Mr Blair nor his ministers did (27 per cent).

Altogether, this means 73 per cent thought that at least some of Mr Blair's colleagues were out of touch.

Poll details, page 2

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Britain

■ Story of my
life: Whoopi
Goldberg on sex,
race and love

■ 1968
remembered:
The revolution
that never was

IN MONDAY'S
INDEPENDENT

■ Billericay boy:
Deborah Ross
meets Tony
Parsons

■ Football
crazy: how
advertisers
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Blair takes heat over links to Murdoch

By Kim Sengupta

THE Prime Minister came in for scathing criticism yesterday for what opposition members described as "an incestuous relationship" with media tycoon Rupert Murdoch.

Labour's chief press officer Alastair Campbell and Minister without Portfolio Peter Mandelson also came under fire and were accused by Liberal Democrat MP Norman Baker of tarnishing the Government.

The MP for Lewes urged Mr Blair to examine his connections with the owner of the *Sun* and the *Times*, control his spin doctors and act like "New Labour, not Old Tory".

"No offence" must be caused to Mr Murdoch, and a Lords Bill to curb his predatory pricing in newspaper circulation war would be overturned, said Mr Baker.

He also claimed that the Government's spin doctors often leaked stories to Mr Murdoch's papers.

A Downing Street press officer, Tim Allan, has recently joined the Murdoch-owned Sky TV.

Mr Baker continued that the situation was "undermining democratic accountability, undermined by the by-passing of Parliament by leaking stories to the media before Parliament is told ... undermined by the incestuous relationship with Rupert Murdoch."

The MP also questioned the amount of taxes paid by Mr Murdoch's company, News International, which between 1985 and 1995, had paid only £11.74 million tax on profits of almost £1 billion, "equivalent to 1.2 pence in the pound", he said.

He continued: "You have talked ... about this incestuous relationship with Mr Rupert Murdoch. I have to say to you that Mr Rupert Murdoch is not treated differently to anybody else."

The Italian premier had initiated the call with Mr Blair, not vice-versa, the minister added.

This is the second time in 48 hours that the Government has been criticised over its relationship with Mr Murdoch.

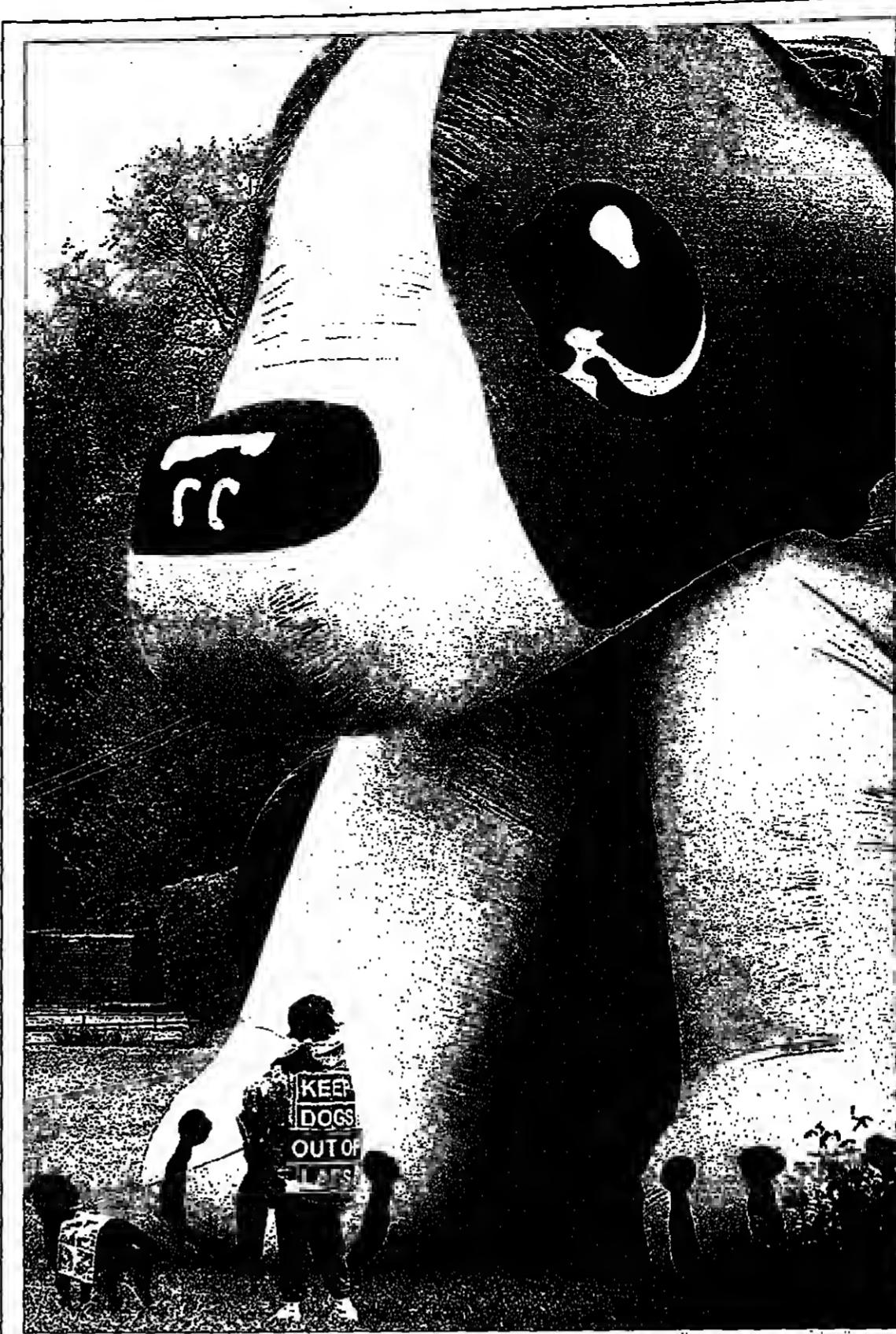
Lord Borrie, the former director general of the Office of Fair Trading, earlier rejected Government assertions that no legal changes were needed on the Competition Bill to tackle predatory policing.

The delayed second reading of the Bill will take place in the Commons on May 5.

The Government is expected to win the vote, but ministers are said to be worried by the adverse publicity the debate will create, as well as rebellion from its backbenchers.

"It seems the Prime Minister is very much in bed with Mr Murdoch - a position I don't envy him."

Mr Baker went on to accuse the Government of a "cover up".



Dog day afternoon: A blow-up dog at an anti-vivisection rally in Battersea Park yesterday to mark World Laboratory Animal Day. The event culminated in a minute's remembrance. Photograph: Glyn Griffiths

Voters back PM but find ministers out of touch

By John Rentoul

THE people's verdict on Labour's first year is that Tony Blair has done well, but that the rest of his government is out of touch and not especially trustworthy, according to a Harris poll for *The Independent*.

The Prime Minister's personal rating has declined gently since the 93 per cent recorded immediately after the election, which is as close as political opinion polls ever get to unanimous. But today's figure of 75 per cent saying he has done a "good job" in the last year remains unprecedented, and is the sort of finding which could easily lead someone, as Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, did this week, to forecast 20 years of Labour government.

But the poll contains many worrying findings for the Government, too. The fact that 46 per cent felt that while Mr Blair understands the problems of ordinary people, "some

of his ministers do not", while a further 27 per cent think that nobody in government understands their problems, suggests the extent to which the Government's image depends on Mr Blair's personal reputation.

Another warning sign is the extent to which Mr Blair has succeeded in reversing the traditional class attitudes of British politics. Charges that he has pandered to middle-class Middle England seem to carry some

weight with working-class voters. Among middle-class ABC1s, the Prime Minister's "good job" rating touches 80 per cent, while C2DEs, who make up the majority in the electorate, mark him down at 71 per cent.

Working-class voters are more likely than the middle classes to say that ministers are untrustworthy or out of touch.

Another paradox is that, despite Mr Blair's "young country" rhetoric, his support is strongest among old-age pensioners who also give him an 80 per cent "good job" rating.

The poll also reveals one of the strongest recent examples of political "false memory syndrome", with 56 per cent of the sample claiming to have voted Labour in the general election last year, as against Labour's actual vote of 44 per cent. Only 25 per cent admitted to voting for the Tories, against their actual 31 per cent, and 14 per cent claimed to have voted Liberal Democrat, against 17 per cent.

Harris Research interviewed 1,189 adults between 17 and 21 April. Data were weighted to match the population, but no adjustments were made for people's reluctance to declare their political views.

HOW LABOUR SCORES AFTER ONE YEAR

Independent/Harris Poll	
Tony Blair has been Prime Minister for nearly a year. Would you say he has done:	
A very good job	11%
A fairly good job	64%
A fairly bad job	12%
A very bad job	5%
Mr Blair understand the problems of ordinary people	
Do you think the Government has, on balance, been honest and trustworthy or not?	49%
Not honest and trustworthy	39%
Do you think that public ser-	
vinces have improved, got worse or stayed the same since Labour came to power?	
Both Mr Blair and his ministers understand the problems of ordinary people	20%
Improved	12%
Stayed the same	65%
Got worse	16%
Do you remember how you voted last year?	
Labour	56%
Conservative	25%
Lib Dem.	14%
Other	5%
(Excluding those who did not vote, refused, don't know)	30%
Do you think that public ser-	

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Both Mr Blair and his ministers understand the problems of ordinary people

Improved

Stayed the same

Got worse

Do you remember how you voted last year?

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Conservative

Lib Dem.

Other

(Excluding those who did not vote, refused, don't know)

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THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 25 APRIL 1998
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Why life in 2020 may be short on joy

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

TWO-HOUR space-shuttle flights to Sydney or San Francisco, a 25-hour working week, one in five fathers staying at home as house-husbands, 350mph trains for commuting to work, and automatic lawn mowing - just a few of the delights in store by the year 2020.

The chances are that within the next two decades Britons will be a lot healthier and wealthier, with more leisure and more technological goodies, according to a new report published today. It will be a world of economic opportunity - for those on the right side of the fence.

In its assessment of the future, the Henley Centre puts the odds on an economic and social crisis at just one in five.

And if that happens, it will be due to an unforeseen global event such as an earthquake in Japan or crash in world stock markets.

So let's bask in its glowing vision of prosperity.

For example, in the world of work, the report predicts less commuting.

Superconductive magnetic levitation trains will zoom into the cities, cutting travel times. "The longest commuter journey will be just under two hours, mainly for the very wealthy using the space shuttle."

Most people will work fewer than 25 hours each week over three or four days, spending their free days involved in community work. This will expand as people take on many welfare roles previously filled by the state, says author Graeme Leach.

With a desktop computer in 2020 "as powerful as all the computers in Silicon Valley today" we will shop on-line, get our entertainment on-line, and even find romance on-line. For, apparently, this is the way many couples will meet.

That must be partly because the Henley Centre is predicting the demise of the office. A tenth of the biggest companies will be entirely "virtual", with no physical HQ, and a quarter of all workers will operate from home.



It foresees an even more flexible world of work, with more self-employment and job hopping. We might spend as much as a month every year out of work, it speculates, in the new world of "friction-free capitalism".

Luckily, home is going to be even more attractive. Falling land prices and a relaxation of green-belt legislation will cut the cost of building an idyllic suburban retreat. Young people will live in the cities but will move out when they start a family.

Technology in the home will have reduced the burden of housework, with robots that vacuum the carpet automatically and intelligent house management systems - nice for the growing army of husbands in pyjamas.

To cap it all, we will live longer, thanks to gene therapy, and be healthier as a result of preventative medicine.

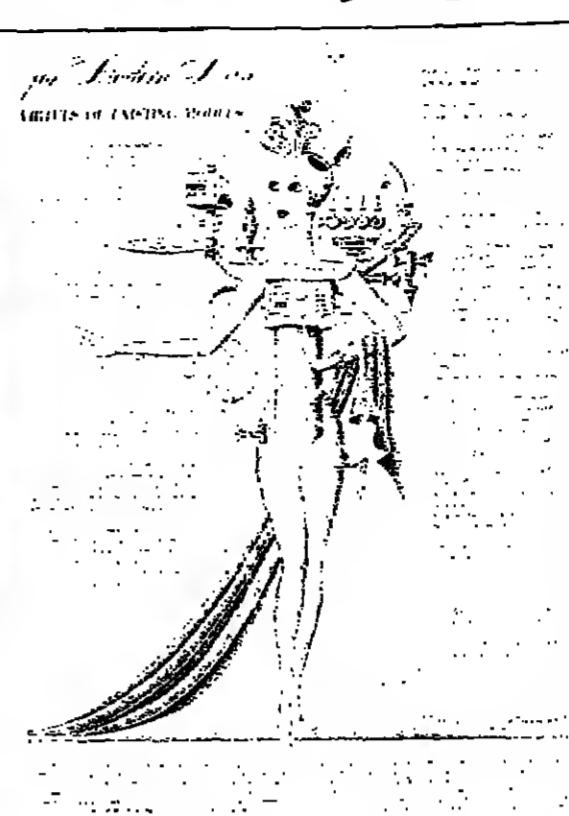
Unfortunately, we will not be any happier, the report reckons. Rather, there will be a growing "crisis of unmet expectations" triggered by the vast array of new products and services available.

Not surprisingly for a report sponsored by Barclays Life, it offers one solution.

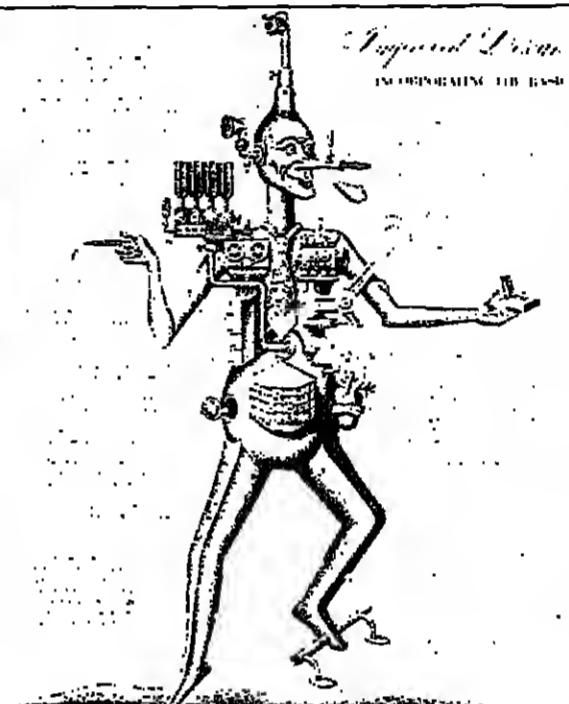
We could all put a lot more effort into saving for hard times.

Nigel Waite, marketing director, draws his own conclusion from the report: "The need for people to make their own financial provisions for retirement and the future is ever increasing."

■ 2020 Vision, £300 from *Barclays Life*, with all proceeds to *Marie Curie Cancer Care*. 0171 459 1995 ext 5911.



Some of the more peculiar ways in which the visionaries of earlier in the century saw our future after 2000
Photographs: Advertising Archives



SPEAKING OF PICTURES...
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A Hollywood favourite forced to test-drive her principles

IN THE NEWS
WHOOPY GOLDBERG



Under the chapter 'Wind' in her new book, Goldberg says how she became 'Whoopi'

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

WHOOPY Goldberg is fearsome when it comes to breaking wind and she's not afraid to admit it, writes Clare Garner. Indeed, she's "a great believer in claiming farts" and has even thought about bottling and marketing hers as Essence of Whoopi.

Breaking wind is the subject of one of the 24 monologues in Ms Goldberg's new book, entitled simply *Book*, published this week. Under the chapter heading "Wind", the woman born Caren Johnson explains how she came to be Whoopi.

"When I was in my twenties and diagnosed with ulcers, I was encouraged to fast up a storm, and my friend started calling me Whoopi," she divulges. "I was like a walking whoopee cushion, they said. And the name sticks, like a good fart, long after my violet scent has dissipated."

So, that clears up any confusion about her name, but what about her age? Her correct birthdate is 1955, making her 42.

But *The Film Encyclopedia* says she is 48. The reason is that as a young actress starting out, Ms Goldberg lied about her age, adding six years because "nobody would hire me to act. Everyone said I was too young."

Back then, Goldberg was a single mother living on benefit in California. She took temporary jobs but was always doing some acting on the side. It was only in 1984, when Mike Nichols, director of *The Graduate* and *Working Girl*, spotted

she starred in the surprise blockbuster comedy, *Sister Act*, which grossed more than \$300m. She hates eggs, men in the bathroom, flying and being called an African American. "Call me an asshole, call me a blowhard, but don't call me an African American. Please," she implores in the "Race" chapter. "It divides us, as a nation and as a people, and it kinda pisses me off. It diminishes everything I've accomplished and everything every other black person has accomplished on American soil."

Goldberg takes honesty seriously. So seriously that when she wed for the third time - to Lyle Trachtenberg, a trade union organiser, in 1994 - her marriage vow was "Maybe", rather than "I do." The marriage lasted one year.

At 19, Goldberg had a daughter, Alexandra, who in turn had a child, Amarah, at 15. In her book, Goldberg recalls how 14-year-old Alexandra telephoned to say: "Mom, I'm pregnant," followed by "Mom? I want to keep this baby." Goldberg was forced to test-drive her principles: "I realised that if I was out there screaming to preserve a woman's right to an abortion, I was also out there preserving my daughter's right not to have an abortion."

April storms set new rainfall record

By Louise Jury

IN THE latest of the rainiest/driest/hottest weather records to be set in the UK, the Easter storms are due to make this month the wettest April of the century.

Just days after scientists announced that the world is hotter than it has been at any time in the past 600 years, weather forecasters are preparing to record rainfall.

Yesterday, the figures collected at 9am fell just 0.8mm short of this century's record of

more than five inches set in 1920.

And a Meteorological Office spokesman said they were confident that rain which fell in many parts of the country yesterday would break the record.

Stephen Davenport, a senior forecaster, said: "There is no doubt it has been an abnormally wet month."

The all-time record is held by April 1782, when there were 5.4 inches of rain - and it is beyond possibility that this record will be broken.

The floods which hit the

Midlands, West Country and Wales over Easter caused chaos, cost four lives and millions of pounds of damage.

Insurers have said the cost of the flooding, which also left hundreds homeless, could reach £500 million.

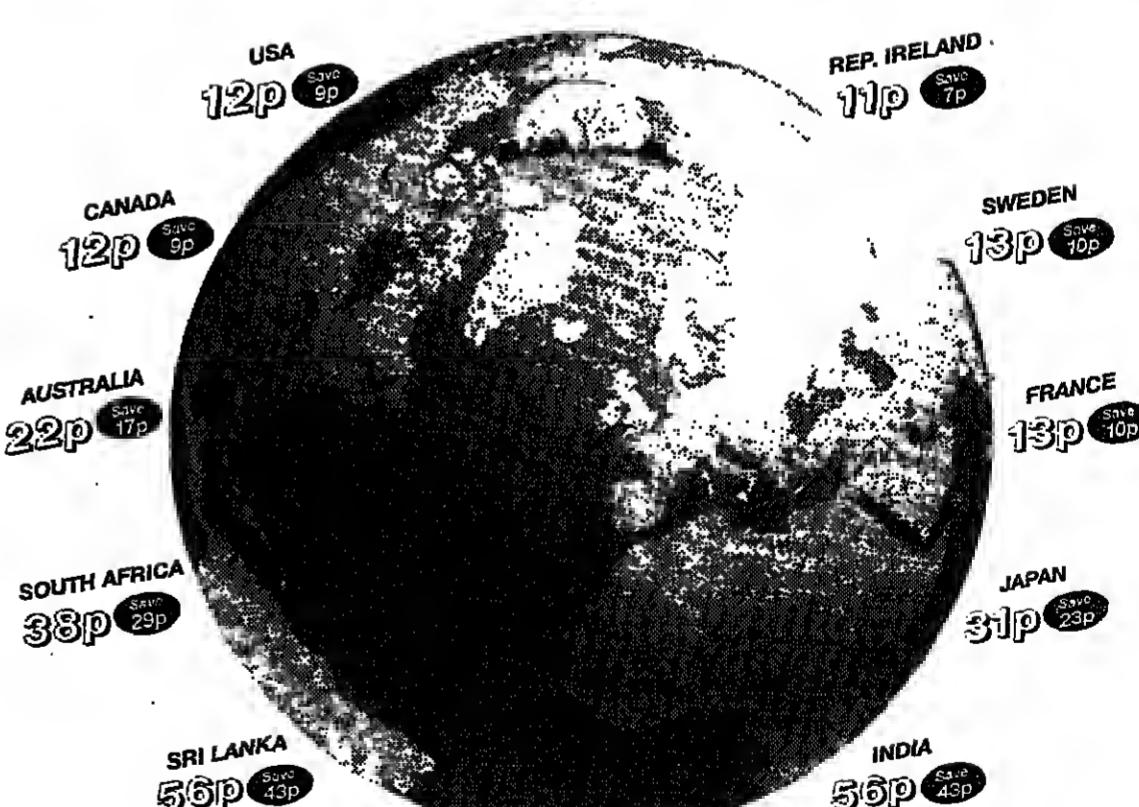
However, every cloud has its silver lining. The downpours have proved a boon for gardeners in Surrey, Sutton and East, Surrey Water yesterday announced the lifting of a sprinkler ban after an inspection showed water levels had returned to normal after a two-year drought.

The year has already seen other bizarre weather conditions. On 13 February, Britain had its hottest February day since records began with a temperature of 19.6 recorded at Barbourne in Worcestershire.

Today, much of England and Wales will have outbreaks of rain, some heavy, but it should clear away from most places to leave sunny spells and a few showers.

Scotland and Northern Ireland will develop showers after a dry, bright start. There is a risk of thunder.

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Police sacrifice rugby to duty

By Andrew Buncombe

ONE CAN only imagine how hard they trained, week in, week out, throughout the long, damp South Wales winter.

But the South Wales Police Rugby Union team are made up of committed men who all strove to make their team the best. And this week their efforts seemed to have been rewarded when they were due to play in the prestigious Police Athletic Association rugby cup final.

But having reached the national final, the team were forced to pull out after their chief constable refused to let enough of them have time off to play.

"It's all very embarrassing really. I think there is a certain amount of egg on the face," said one anonymous police source.

The team had been due to play the final against Lancashire Police last Wednesday at Coventry. But at a training session the night before, it became obvious that not enough players would be able to get time off. Rather than take a weakened squad, the team pulled out.

"Of course it is disappointing. We were very much looking forward to the match and the team had worked very hard," said Inspector Mike Lerway, the team manager. "But we are police officers and we realise that our first duty has to be to our community and we support our chief constable on that."

In the past, South Wales officers had been given time off to play sport. But there has been pressure in recent years from the force's authority to stop this. In a statement, chief constable Tony Burden said: "Although the officers were not available to play in the PAA cup final, it should be remembered that their priority is to police the community of South Wales."

The team's chance now lies with the PAA who will consider an appeal to have the game rearranged. As it happens, Mr Burden is the PAA's secretary.

No 10 denies Trimble call halted report

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

TONY Blair's office denied yesterday that a call from David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, to Downing Street led to the Prime Minister's intervention and the postponement of a contentious Parades Commission report on Orange marches.

The resignation of two members immediately after the commission's agreement to hold back the report plunged it into crisis and threatened to undermine the success of the "yes" campaign for the referendum on the peace settlement on 22 May.

Mr Trimble, who is facing a growing challenge as Ulster Unionist leader to his support for the "yes" campaign, said he was angry at reports that the commission was planning to

announce its intention to ban the loyalist march in Drumcree, in his own constituency.

Confirming Mr Trimble's call had been made, the Prime Minister's spokesman said that it had taken place after Mr Blair had already asked the commission chairman, Alastair Graham, to halt the publication of the report over fears that it would undermine Unionist and loyalist support for a "yes" vote in the referendum.

Mr Trimble confirmed contacting a Labour backbencher MP about his anger over the report, but Downing Street could not comment on claims that the MP was a close aide to the Prime Minister.

Mr Trimble, who was in America, denied speaking directly to Mr Blair before the decision to halt the report was taken.

Mr Trimble said he had

made representations to Mr Graham "in the strongest terms" that it would be "lunatic, absolute folly" to ban the Drumcree Orange parade.

"We have got to have as normal a summer as possible, for the Drumcree church service to go ahead would be a sign of normality. For it to be interrupted would plunge this province back into conflict," Mr Trimble said.

Downing Street said Mr Blair did not believe the resignation of two members from the commission had wrecked its credibility. Mr Blair is confident that it will replace the two members and carry out its task in vetting marches after the referendum result is known.

Mr Hague acknowledged on BBC radio that some people – including former Lady Thatcher – were "extremely anxious" about the proposals to free paramilitaries who have bombed and murdered.

But there could be no overall settlement plan without agreement on the issue of the prisoners, he said.

"This is a historic opportunity to bring peace to Northern Ireland," Mr Hague said.

early release of terrorist prisoners is part of the package.

He faced fresh criticism from Lord Tebbit, following the attack by the former prime minister, Baroness Thatcher, on plans to release terrorists who had targeted the Tory cabinet. Some Tory MPs also warned that they will vote against the special Bill to allow the prisoners to be freed on licence when it comes before the Commons.

Mr Hague acknowledged on BBC radio that some people – including former Lady Thatcher – were "extremely anxious" about the proposals to free paramilitaries who have bombed and murdered.

But there could be no overall settlement plan without agreement on the issue of the prisoners, he said.

"This is a historic opportunity to bring peace to Northern Ireland," Mr Hague said.



Challenging times: David Trimble, who is under mounting pressure from among Ulster Unionists over his support for a 'yes' vote in next month's referendum, giving a speech at the Ulster Halls in Belfast. Photograph: Brian Harris

Bishop rails at 'wreckers' of Ulster deal

By Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

THE murder of a Catholic man was "clinically and viciously executed" by terrorists attempting to destroy any hopes of peace in Northern Ireland, a bishop told mourners at the victim's funeral yesterday.

Adrian Lamph, 29, shot while at work in Portadown, Co Armagh, on Tuesday, was the first victim of a sectarian killing since the peace agreement was signed on Good Friday.

Detail also emerged yesterday of another attack against a 79-year-old man shot in both legs and beaten in his home in Belfast in a paramilitary-style assault on Thursday night.

Gerald Clifford, the Bishop of Armagh, said at Mr Lamph's funeral: "Once more the violent death of an innocent man has struck at the core of what we hold sacred... All of us watched intently as the politicians strived to find a solution to the problems of Northern Ireland that would be acceptable to us all. The vast majority believe that can still be achieved but there are some, the men and women of violence, who feel threatened by the prospect of peace. They feel so threatened they are willing to kill and murder to ensure that peace never comes."

He continued: "I have no doubt that the murder of Adrian Lamph was clinically and viciously executed to ensure that Portadown would rebel at the prospect of peace..."

Parish priest Father Sean Larkin told hundreds of mourners at St John the Baptist Church: "For ever indelibly

imprinted on my mind is the memory of walking down the long hospital corridor to the intensive care unit where Adrian lay dying and seeing a trail of his lifeblood along the corridor floor." The priest paid tribute to Mr Lamph, a council employee, as a "likeable, hard-working young man." His girlfriend, Nichola McKee, with whom he had a two-year-old son, and his father, Tommy, led the procession of mourners.

Police are still investigating Mr Lamph's murder; it is believed the hardline Loyalist Volunteer Force was behind the killing.

Police yesterday pledged to track down those responsible for the attack on the elderly man. A gang forced their way into his home at Alamein Lodge in the nationalist New Lodge area of north Belfast and shot him in both knees and both ankles. The victim was also beaten about the head.

Detectives said they were puzzled by the attack because of the victim's age, but said it bore all the hallmarks of a paramilitary punishment shooting. They called it "a sickening attack on a weak and defenceless pensioner".

RUC Chief Inspector Mervyn Patton said: "It was nothing short of torture and the things who brutalised him must be caught." The pensioner was described as being in a stable condition.

The incident was one of two "kneecappings" on Thursday night. A 30-year-old man was also shot in both legs during an attack on the nationalist Twinbrook estate in west Belfast.

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Ian Tordoff: Awaiting sentence for electricity theft

Scrap dealer stole electricity to power his home

By Andrew Buncombe

A SCRAP dealer used thousands of pounds worth of stolen electricity to power an inn, workshop, colour televisions, a dishwasher, a microwave, a fridge-freezer and a hi-fi by illegally hooking up to a lamp post, a court heard yesterday.

Ian Tordoff led a cable from his house to a specially constructed joint at the base of the lampost where he could connect up his supply when he wished.

Leeds Crown Court heard yesterday that Tordoff, 44, was only caught after police could not understand why his kitchen lights remained on after being shown that his generator – which he claimed powered his home – was switched off.

After a four-day trial Tordoff, from Stanley, near Wakefield, West Yorkshire, was found guilty of the illegal use of electricity between June 1996 and March 1997. He was also found guilty of damaging property belonging to Yorkshire Electricity. He had denied the charges.

Tordoff, whose wife and teenage

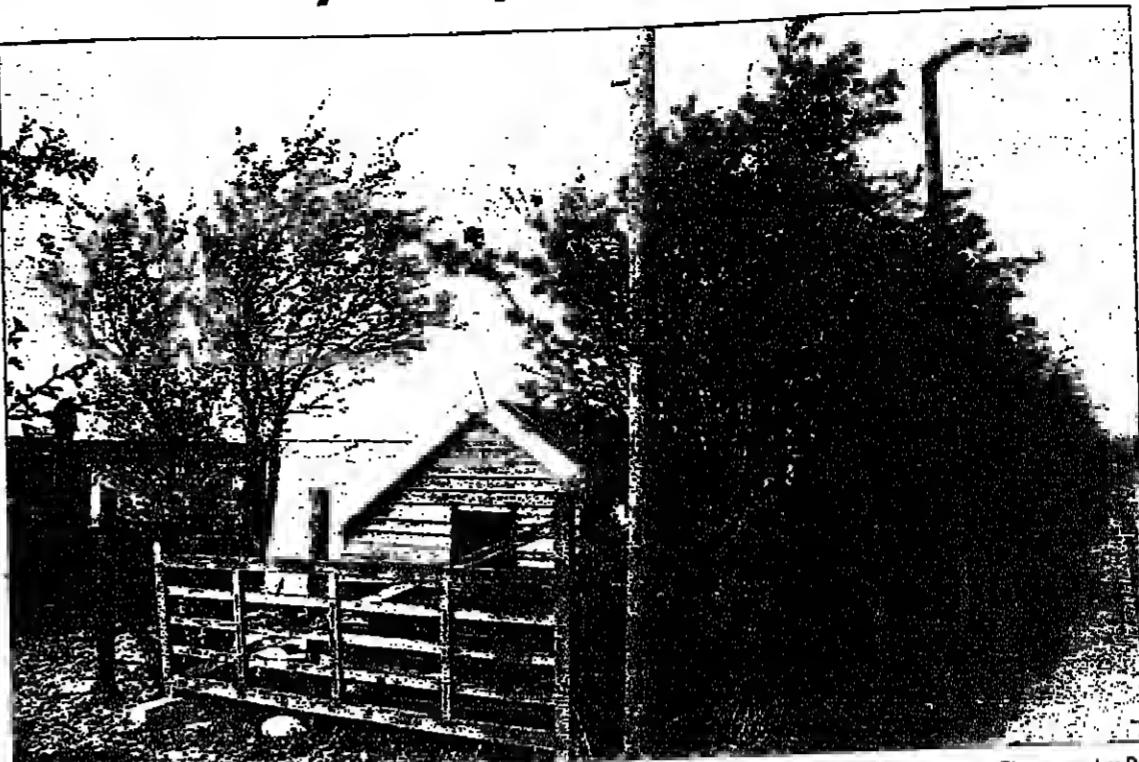
son were in court, was released on bail to await sentencing. Assistant Recorder Jennifer Kershaw QC said the adjournment was an indication of what sentence she would give. Peter Robertshaw, Tordoff's solicitor, said they were considering appealing against the verdict.

After the case Yorkshire Electricity said anyone tampering with such equipment was risking their life.

Kevin Miles, the company's customer services director, said: "People who steal electricity don't just run the risk of being caught but also of killing someone else."

He said the company's meter reading teams were trained to spot cases of fraud.

"We also monitor people's bills and consumption and can often easily identify when people are cheating," he added. "This crime is like shoplifting – it's the honest customers who end up paying for it."



An outbuilding Tordoff powered with electricity stolen via a cable from a street lamp

Photographs: PA

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Uranium reaches Dounreay

By Charles Arthur
Science and Technology Editor

A CONSIGNMENT of uranium from the former Soviet Republic of Georgia arrived safely at the Dounreay nuclear plant in Scotland yesterday, but triggered off a storm of political and environmental argument which refused to abate.

The shipment arrived at RAF Kinloss early yesterday morning in two United States Galaxy air freighters, and was driven to Dounreay 100 miles away in a four-hour journey. In a Commons written reply, Foreign Office minister Doug Henderson told MPs that the 10kg of weapons-grade uranium and irradiated reactor fuel "had now arrived safely at Dounreay where it is being handled by the UK Atomic Energy Authority. Further information on the decision to accept the material would be given in the Commons next week", Mr Henderson said.

But environmental campaigners said that they were considering launching a legal bid to try to have the reprocessing stopped, and the Scottish National Party accused the government of showing "bad faith" towards Scotland.

The SNP's environment spokeswoman Roseanna Cunningham, insisted that the Government's stated plan to turn the material into medical isotopes was a "made-up story" to disguise its motive. She suggested that the deal might have been struck by Prime Minister Tony Blair with President Bill Clinton for some other reason – or else that it was done to set a precedent opening

the door to restart commercial reprocessing at Dounreay.

Insisting that there was no shortage of medical isotopes, she said: "What are the reasons why it is being brought? We need to enquire far more closely how this deal was done. They have driven a coach and horses through the regulatory set-up governing Dounreay. Having done it once, I do not see why they would not use it as a precedent to do it again. Is this an attempt to restart Dounreay as a commercial reprocessing plant?"

But the Secretary of State for Scotland, Donald Dewar, told BBC Radio Scotland he was happy for the uranium to be dealt with at the plant. He said: "We are prepared to do our bit under the non-proliferation treaty and be a good citizen in world terms."

But the Government instead attacked SNP leader Alex Salmond, with Scottish industry minister Brian Wilson insisting that the nuclear material would benefit medicine, and demanding that Mr Salmond should repudiate quotes attributed to him which accused ministers of lying.

"If however you stand by them [attributed quotes], then I must tell you that you are responsible for a dangerous and cynical falsehood which I call on you to withdraw," Mr Wilson wrote. He said that the material from Georgia would eventually produce "some five million treatment doses, for the benefit of cancer sufferers" and the "second crucial fact" was that there was a shortage of the medical isotopes.

Magnet strikers to accept pay-off

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

BRITAIN'S longest-running and arguably most theatrical industrial dispute ended yesterday when workers at the Magnet Kitchen company voted narrowly to accept an £85,000 pay-off.

The conflict, which took place in Darlington next door to the Prime Minister's constituency, was resolved when strikers voted 47 to 34 to accept an average £8,500 severance payment.

At one stage or another the dispute involved an "eco-camp", the establishment of a chicken farm and a replica of Del Boy's three-wheeler van from television's *Only Fools and Horses*.

Former miners from Derbyshire expressed support for the dismissed workers by demonstrating outside the Cambridgeshire mansion of Alan Bowker, chairman of the Berisford group, which owns Magnet.

An injunction was sought against the eco-camp on the grounds that it formed an unlawful picket line around Mr Bowker's home. The ex-pitmen

then took over a nearby field and set up what they described as a chicken farm.

The three-wheeler van, used to portray the alleged "spivvy" nature of the company, haunted Magnet Kitchens' shops and numerous company meetings.

The street theatre, however, failed to win reinstatement for the strikers who originally walked out for a week over pay in 1996, were subsequently sacked and have picketed the Darlington plant ever since.

Embarrassed by the increasingly high profile dispute near his constituency home, Tony Blair ended his "hands-off" approach in the Commons recently when he urged both sides to settle the matter with the help of conciliation service Acas.

The GMB general union, the Transport and General Workers' Union and construction union Unite ballot members under the threat that the severance offer would be withdrawn at the end of the month. A relieved David Williams, managing director of Magnet, welcomed the result of the ballot.

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Labour MPs get script on targeting members

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

LABOUR has so refined its management techniques that it has even circulated ministers as well as MPs with a "script" for follow-up calls to people who have only been members of the party for a year, and whose election-time membership now needs renewal.

Designed for apparent simpletons, the "script" starts off by asking MPs: "Who are we calling?" It replies: "Members at the end of their first year of Labour Party membership, who are due to renew for the first time.

"The great majority of your calls should be positive, however, depending on what the issues of the day are, this may not always be an easy call to make. But it is always worth doing - the very fact that an MP is calling a member at the end of their first year

of membership will send very strong signals of worth, recognition, and involvement and should result in the member renewing their membership."

According to the "script", the purpose of the call is "To find out how the member views their first year of membership; to listen to what they have to say about the Labour government and its policies; to encourage them to renew their membership."

The script starts: "Hello,

may I speak to _____? My

name is _____. I'm your

Member of Parliament here in

_____. I'm calling because I

see that you have been a

Labour Party member for al-

most a year and I just wanted

to make contact with you at this

important time.

"How have you viewed your

membership so far? (listen to

answer and respond.) Are there

any local issues you think I should be dealing with? (Listen and respond.) Are there any national issues you feel strongly about? (Listen and respond.)

"At that point, MPs are told to ask about membership renewal, saying: "I do hope that you will be able to renew your membership."

"If YES: That's great, _____, I'm really pleased. You will be getting a letter from the party in the near future.

"If NO: Why not?" The MP is told that if there is a political objection, they should turn the page and read from the "objection responses".

"Under that heading, if the disaffected party member says: "I disagree with the Labour policy on _____", the MP is told to say: "Fair enough. But there are very few members of the party who agree with every

single point of policy; that's why the Labour Party is so strong because there is constant discussion of all areas over the whole party, and everyone's view is listened to."

"You may disagree with the policy on _____, but I'm sure that overall, you still support the overall aims and objectives of the Labour government."

If the member then says: "What's the point? You're just the same as the Tories", the MP is told to say: "No, we're not."

"The Tories showed again and again that they were only interested in themselves. Decisions they made about the country were determined by how much it benefited themselves and their friends - you only need to look at all the examples of government sleaze that were discovered over the last two years of their government to see that in action..."

All faiths
welcome
in Lords,
says
Carey

THE ARCHBISHOP of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, said today he would welcome the creation of peers representing other faiths as part of the reform of the House of Lords.

But he signalled that any moves by the Government to cut the 26 seats reserved for Church of England bishops would be firmly resisted.

Dr Carey issued a statement after a newspaper report that he and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, had discussed moves to reduce the number of bishops in the Lords to make room for representatives of other faiths.

The idea comes as the Government considers ways to reform membership of the Lords after the abolition of the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the Upper House.

Currently, although some non-Anglicans sit in the Lords, they are not there on behalf of their religions. The Government believes that members of the Roman Catholic, Methodist, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu faiths should also be allotted seats.

The Cabinet Office said that cutting the number of bishops to make way for representatives of other faiths was a "possible idea", but said it was not yet on the agenda of the committee dealing with Lords reform.

"The committee hasn't even begun to think about this yet. It's not even been talked about. It's a possible idea but there are no proposals to do this yet," a spokesman said.

Lambeth Palace confirmed that Dr Carey had a private lunch with the Lord Chancellor in February at which "a number of different topics were discussed informally". The Lord Chancellor's Department also confirmed that Lord Irvine had met the Archbishop, but said it was a private meeting and a wide range of issues had been discussed.

In its latest statement, Lambeth Palace made clear Dr Carey would welcome the creation of peers of other faiths, but gave a clear hint that he opposed reducing the number of Church of England bishops.

The Archbishop does not see any necessary link between the number of Church of England Bishops in the House of Lords and numbers of peers of other church and faith affiliations. The Church has long made it clear it would welcome the creation of more such peers.

"The Archbishop looks forward to further constructive discussions about these and other matters as the shape of proposals about the overall size, nature and composition of a reformed Upper House become clearer," Lambeth Palace said.

Viscount Cranborne, Tory leader in the Lords, seized on these latest claims about reform of the Upper House to attack the Government.

"This is a piecemeal approach by this Government towards the reform of the House of Lords," he said.

Labour leaders were pressuring on yesterday with a "brave" attempt to get taxpayers' money to pay for MPs' briefing notes from the Labour Party.

Tory leaders called for a Commons inquiry into the disclosure yesterday by the *Independent* that MPs were being asked to arrange with the Commons fees office for payments of £400 a year to be paid direct to a Labour bank account for the party briefing service.

Facing a barrage of criticism over the alleged "fiddle", Labour leaders continued yesterday to seek the approval of the fees office for the payments. The *Independent* learned that Nick Brown, the Labour Chief Whip, contacted the fees office yesterday as Labour faced a storm of criticism to seek a way around the objections to the payments by the fees office.

But last night the fees office confirmed that it was writing to Mr Brown ruling out the payments, which are intended for necessary constituency allowances and office costs.

Hilary Armstrong, the minister for local government, had indicated earlier that the party was refusing to give up the plan: "This is commercially

available material which is on the open market and isn't specifically for Labour MPs.

"Any MP is able to make sure they get the information that is necessary about what's going on in this country and beyond this country to make sure they have got the appropriate

press office.

"If the Tories bought it, they would want to make holes in it rather than use it, which would defeat the object of the exercise."

The Inland Revenue, which could be asked to refund the payments, had also indicated that it would not comply with the scheme, if it was not necessary for all MPs to claim it.

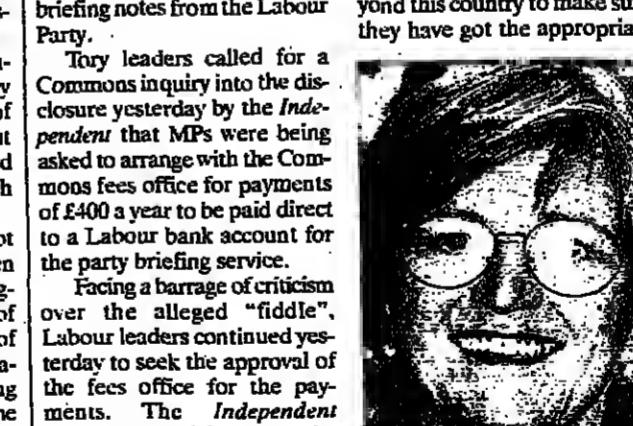
Tom Sawyer, general secretary of the party, wrote to Labour MPs at the start of this month offering to provide Labour MPs with a 24-hour media monitoring service.

Gillian Shepherd, Tory spokeswoman on House of Commons affairs, said she would write to both Commons Speaker Betty Boothroyd and Leader of the Commons Ant Taylor calling for an investigation. She would also raise the matter in the House.

"It's no surprise that Labour MPs need such a service, as they cannot carry out even the most basic tasks without being told what to do by Mr Blair."

"But taxpayers should not be made to pay for a service they wouldn't want if it was being given away," she said.

A source in the fees office said Labour MPs would not be reimbursed if they claimed expenses for the media monitoring service: "No way, Jose," he declared.



Lord Hattersley showing his emotion at the funeral of former sports minister Lord Denis Howell at St Paul's Church in Birmingham yesterday. Photograph: Newsteam

Party under fire on briefing notes plan

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

LABOUR leaders were pressuring on yesterday with a "brave" attempt to get taxpayers' money to pay for MPs' briefing notes from the Labour Party.

"Any MP is able to make sure they get the information that is necessary about what's going on in this country and beyond this country to make sure they have got the appropriate

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Prescott targets lorries in green plan

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

JOHN Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, yesterday announced a new deal which will cut 1,000 lorry journeys a year on a busy road as part of the Government's plans to reduce traffic levels.

The scheme, a smaller version of a nationwide plan which has yet to receive public subsidy, will see three train trips a day made between Liverpool and Tilbury.

Lorry containers will be placed instead on specially converted freight wagons. The commercial agreement between two companies - Freightliner and Tankfreight - was unveiled at a special locomotive naming ceremony in Chester.

Mr Prescott, who was accompanied by EU Transport Commissioner Neil Kinnock, said rail freight was "experiencing a revival in this country".

"This new contract, starting in June, is for the carriage of purpose-built road tankers between Liverpool and Tilbury using 'piggyback' wagons and is excellent news for the railways and the environment," he said.

Mr Prescott said the move was particularly relevant as European ministers will this week discuss the role of railways in reducing traffic congestion. Mr Kinnock also warned of a "crisis of congestion" adding that asthma levels were among the highest in Europe.

The freight industry welcomed the move, but emphasised the actual number of journeys being shifted to the railways would be very small. "It is a good sign, but it's a small

number of journeys is very small," said a spokesman for the Freight Transport Association.

Experts say the key to shifting lorry loads from road to rail is to upgrade the main rail freight route between the Channel Tunnel northwards to Scotland.

Railtrack, the company that owns the nation's stations and infrastructure, believes its £235m plan for the route could remove 400,000 lorry journeys off the roads.

Mr Prescott yesterday warned Labour supporters not to expect spending restraint to be thrown away when the party's old campaigner gave his own endorsement of new Labour's first year in office, writes Colin Brown.

Promising more "hard work" than celebrations for the first anniversary on 1 May of Labour's election landslide, Mr Prescott told a campaign meeting in Chester that the key government event of the summer would be the White Paper on government spending.

But he said: "Gone are the days of assuming that money is the answer to every problem. There are many imaginative ways of making better use of the resources we have."

That was seen as a "clear message to Cabinet colleagues who are fighting a last ditch battle for billions of pounds worth of extra spending for their department budgets to accept restraint before final agreement is reached on the comprehensive spending review."

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Alistair Darling, is engaged in an exhaustive round of negotiations over the details.

Hague defends Tory team as Dorrell quits

By Colin Brown

STEPHEN DORRELL has told William Hague he wants to stand down from the Shadow Cabinet to spend more time with his family.

The Conservative education spokesman has been the butt of heavy criticism for his lacklustre performance in Opposition. But he has told the Tory leader that he has not been able to devote as much time as he would have liked to his brief, and has been trying to spend more time with his young family. He will stand down from the front bench when Mr Hague reshuffles his Shadow Cabinet. "It is

potentially glittering career for one of the young moderates in the one nation Tory tradition."

The resignation did little to help Mr Hague's attempt to bolster his party's standing amid claims that his Shadow Cabinet was full of "shadows". His close colleagues are expecting a reshuffle to beef up the performance of the Opposition.

Those tipped for promotion include Ann Widdecombe, the fire and brimstone former home office minister, who served Michael Howard's chances of winning the leadership; David Willetts, an intellectual heavyweight behind the leadership; and Liam Fox, a GP and former whip.

Mr Hague yesterday gave a clear hint that he was poised to sack some of his team. The Tory leader said: "It is important to bring on new talent and I am pleased to say there is a lot of new talent in the party."

Mr Hague told a local government election campaign conference that under his leadership, the party was going to "stop arguing and start canvassing". But at Westminster, there has been growing criticism that his Shadow Cabinet has failed to get to grips with its role in opposition of attacking Labour.

The criticism spread to Mr Hague when he allowed Andrew Mackay, the Northern Ireland spokesman, to miss the Good Friday Ulster peace settlement by going on holiday with his wife to Namibia.

Other Tory frontbenchers who have been criticised for the lack of impact include Mr Dorrell; Sir George Young, the defence spokesman; and John Maples, the spokesman on health. They have been made to look inactive by the hyperactive John Redwood, attacking Margaret Beckett and her team, and Iain Duncan Smith, the right-wing social security shadow to Harriet Harman.



Ann Widdecombe tipped for promotion.

Unicable. It's not about Europe," said one of his friends.

Another source said: "He's told William Hague that he wants to spend more time with his family. He was disappointed after the leadership, and maybe it was a mistake carrying on but he did so out of duty to the party. Now he thinks it's time to step down."

Mr Dorrell, who also has a family clothing company, was disappointed in failing to gain sufficient support to mount a full challenge for the Tory party leadership against Mr Hague after John Major stood down. The former health secretary in the Major government, Mr Dorrell's decision to leave the front bench brings to an end a po-



Buffer zone: Crewe station. Officials denied its shabbiness was the reason for going by road

Photograph: Sean Pagett

Crewe defended after ministers switch to cars

By Michael McCarthy
Environment Correspondent

GOVERNMENT efforts at greening the transport sector ran into congestion yesterday when it laid on 50 motor vehicles to take European ministers to a conference on transport and the environment.

On the day that a private member's Bill on traffic reduction went through the Commons with government support, 30 saloons - "they're not limousines," a Government spokesman insisted - were sent with 20 people-carriers to ferry EU transport and environment ministers from Manchester airport to their meeting at Chester.

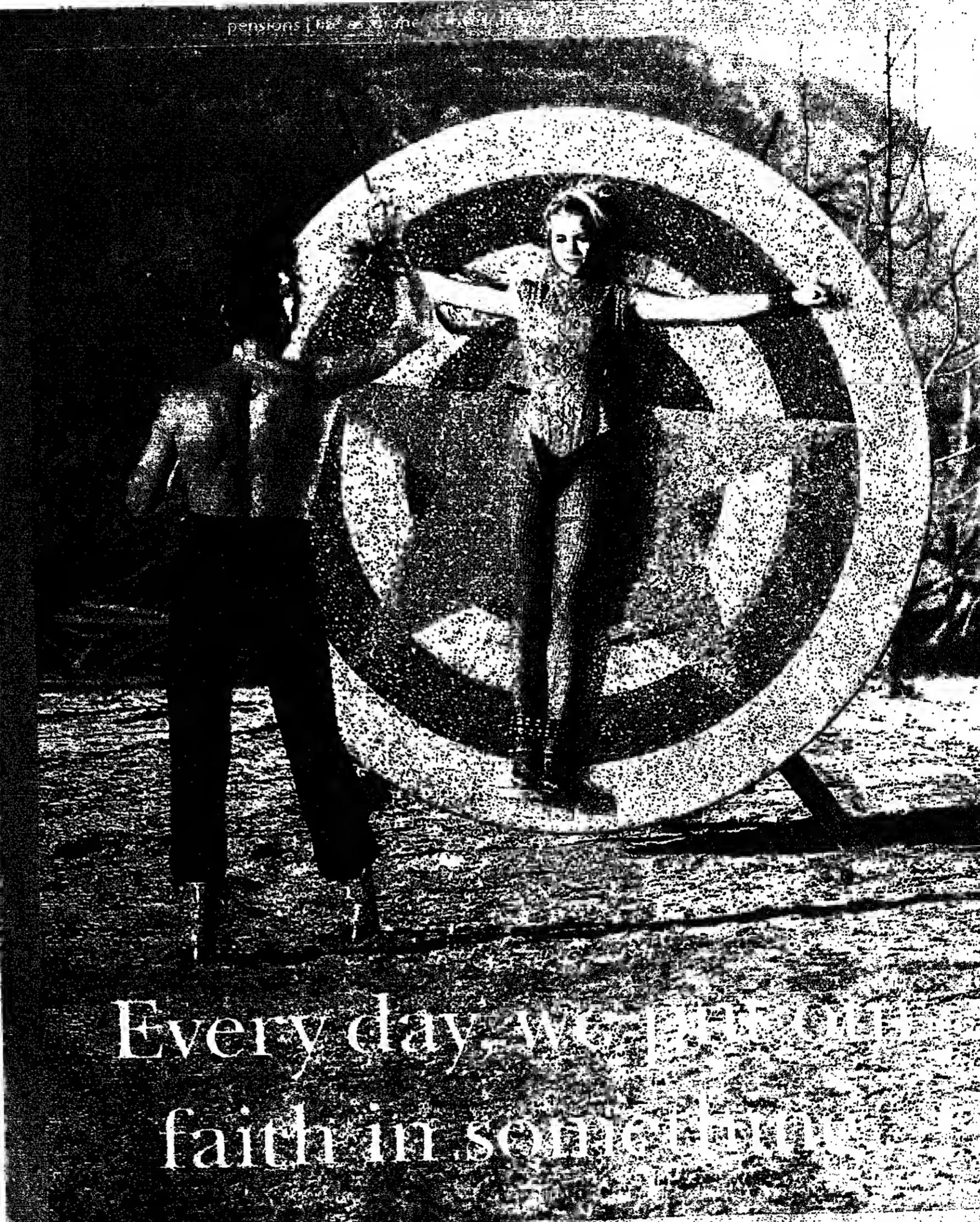
Environmental groups said they could have gone by train. "Lining up 50 vehicles at an airport is sending a very strong signal that they're not serious," said Tony Juniper, campaigns director of Friends of the Earth.

The EU ministers are attending the first joint environment-

ment-transport council meeting this weekend, hosted in his home city by the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, who this morning opened Europe's largest green-vehicle show, a display of alternatively powered cars. There was nothing alternative, however, about the cars which took the ministers the 35 miles from the airport in their hotels. They were a fleet of Ford Granada Scorpions, Vauxhall Omega and Rover 800s, the first two of which, according to the AA, will be unlikely to reach 30mpg in petrol consumption.

The Government denied a report that it had rejected the rail option because of the shabbiness of Crewe station, where the ministers would have had to change. "It's nothing to do with Crewe, it's simple logistics," a spokesman said. "All of these ministers could fly direct to Manchester, except for the people from Athens. They want to be collected and taken to Chester."

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Cat's tale Two salesroom assistants look through a catalogue at Christie's in London as Frederick, Lord Leighton's Kittens await transportation

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Space probe finds suggestion of life on Jupiter's second moon

By Michael Hanlon

ORGANIC chemicals have been discovered on Europa, Jupiter's second moon, dramatically increasing the probability that life is lurking beneath its icy surface.

The Galileo unmanned space probe, currently surveying Jupiter and its satellites, has discovered traces of hydrocarbons - compounds containing carbon and hydrogen - on the surface of Europa, a world about the same size as our Moon. "This is certainly one of the requisites for having carbon-based life," said one of the team of scientists from the US space agency Nasa analysing the data.

Researchers are already increasingly confident that Europa consists of an icy shell about 30 miles thick, over a warm, dark ocean of water 80 miles deep, which is warmed by tidal forces from Jupiter. They

also know from Earth's deep oceans that life can exist in total darkness, given warmth and chemicals to use as food.

The latest results, obtained by the probe on its 12th fly-by of Europa in January, were captured by an instrument called a Near Infrared Mapping Spectrometer (Nims). This can detect the absorption spectra - a radiation "fingerprint" - of substances on the surface.

During the fly-by, Galileo sent back data indicating that several organic compounds - complex chemicals containing carbon - were present on Europa's surface, including substances called tholines. These are reckoned to have been present in Earth's primordial soup, from which life is thought to have evolved 3 billion years ago.

Organic, carbon-based chemicals do not in themselves equal life. And similar findings have been made for other ob-

jects in the solar system, notably in comets and several other moons of Jupiter. Nor do the scientists at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, yet know exactly what compounds Galileo has detected. However, they think they are an exciting development.

"It could be alkanes, alkenes, aromatic hydrocarbons - if you are going to postulate any kind of organic chemical then these results would tie in with that," said William Smythe, who is analysing the Nims data from Galileo. "One of the absorption wavelengths indicated the presence of tholines - a sort of organic gunk. You get it left over from swamps, and it is also the stuff thought to have been around in Earth's primordial soup."

It is not yet known where these chemicals come from. They could originate in comets, which are known to be rich in

carbon compounds. But if the surface of Europa is as mobile and active as many scientists believe, a more likely explanation is that they have made their way up from the depths.

Mr Smythe said: "It could be comets, we are certainly a long way from saying this stuff was made by sea serpents underneath the ice. It's a matter of taste really how you interpret these results until we have more data. Europa is one of the better places we have found for life-producing conditions. If all this stuff about icebergs is true, then it is more exciting than those meteorites from Mars."

High-resolution photographs of Europa taken by Galileo last year appeared to show "icebergs" apparently embedded in a liquid or slushy layer, and even dark "ponds" where the ice is very thin.

Teenager's cell death is ruled an accident

AN INQUEST jury yesterday returned a verdict of accidental death after a 15-year-old burglary suspect was found hanged in a police cell. David Green was found unconscious in a cell in Hartlepool, Cleveland, on Easter Monday, last year and died in hospital two days later.

David from Hartlepool, was detained on 30 March last year on suspicion of burglary and possessing a controlled drug. A day later he was found hanged.

Andrew Jenkins, who had found David in his home, said the teenager had warned both him and police that he was going to kill himself.

Ruth Bundy, representing David's family, had told the coroner: "The failures that have occurred in this case go beyond mere carelessness and amount accumulatively to a gross failure of care to a vulnerable, young man who had taken drugs."

But the coroner, Malcolm Donnelly, told the hearing in Hartlepool that he could not direct the jury to return a verdict of neglect or lack of care.

On instructing the jurors, he said that even though David had put the rope around his neck there was no suggestion that he intended to kill himself. He said it could have been a cry for help.

After the inquest David's uncle, Alan Cotsen, said: "We hope this will never happen again. Something has got to be done to stop tragedies like this happening. This should never ever have happened in police custody in a 15-year-old bairn."

Miss Bundy said: "This has been the first step. Inquest verdicts are often a damp squib, but these five days have been invaluable because they have set

us on our way to take civil action. The family are not stopping here."

Deborah Coles, co-director of the lobby group Inquest, which represented the family, said: "David, a 15 years old, was the youngest person ever to die in police custody. This should send a clear warning to all police forces around the country about the particular vulnerability of young people held in cells and the need for greater vigilance and monitoring."

"I am absolutely appalled at the failings of Cleveland police to care for a child in their care and the callous indifference that they have shown towards the family since David's tragic death over a year ago. To this day David's family have yet to receive any message of condolence."

David had told his mother, Barbara, that he was a heroin user and was not afraid of dying, the inquest had heard. It was also revealed that the alarm buzzers in cells were not working when David died, but the custody officer, Sergeant David Harrison, said that he was not aware of this. Superintendent Kenneth Blackett, head of Cleveland Police's complaints department, said they were repaired in August - six months after the fault was found.

Stu Blackett said after the inquest: "This has been a harrowing 12 months for all those concerned with the tragedy, especially David's family. Lessons have been learnt, but I was reassured to note that the coroner was satisfied nothing done by any of the police officers who dealt with David contributed to this tragedy."

Supermarket brands 'not fooling shoppers'

By Louise Jury

THE BIG manufacturers need not fear, British consumers do not pale imitations of well-known supermarket brands.

Although makers of successful branded products have long complained that similar-looking ones confuse the consumer, a survey has shown it is not a major problem.

The Consumers' Association found that nine per cent of 2,000 shoppers questioned admitted picking up a look-alike product by mistake thinking it was "the real thing".

But only four per cent actually bought it, usually spotting their mistake before getting to the cash till. Of those, one in five were very annoyed, but only a few felt really conned.

Some shoppers even claimed the look-alikes were useful.

Nearly a third liked them because their children would think the supermarket brands were the same as the big name items, and 40 per cent said children would think they were as good as their brand rivals.

Products identified as attracting particular close imitation included Nescafe Fine Blend coffee and Sainsbury's Fair Roast and Kellogg's Crunchy Nut Cornflakes and Tesco Honey Nut Cornflakes.

Manufacturers who have objected in the past include United Biscuits which successfully took Asda to court for "passing off" its own-brand Puffin biscuits as the better-known Penguins.

Sainsbury's amended the packaging of its own-brand Classic Cola when Coca Cola objected to the similarities between the cans.

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Yeltsin gamble pays off as Kiriyenko wins

By Phil Reeves
in Moscow

A LARGE nail was thumped into the coffin of Russia's Communists yesterday after a humiliating defeat in parliament which finally, at the third and final vote, 'confirmed' Boris Yeltsin's protégé as prime minister.

Pressure is now on Gennady Zyuganov, runner-up in the last presidential election, to stand down as Communist leader after the majority of his faction's 138 members defied his orders – and those of the party's central committee – to vote against Sergei Kiriyenko.

The result was a humiliation for the Communist party, which has grown to become the largest opposition force in Russia after being banned by Boris Yeltsin in 1991 but reinstated by the courts.

Although Mr Kiriyenko, a 35-year-old former banker and oil refinery manager, was widely expected to squeeze through, the vote turned out to be decisive enough confirming him by a 251-25 margin. Quickly afterwards, he was summoned to the Kremlin where a triumphant Boris Yeltsin formal-

ly appointed him in the post.

Although the president hailed the result as 'victory of reason over emotion', the political cost was considerable.

Mr Yeltsin's chief success was to have extricated himself from a blunder, which began

Communist leader faces pressure to step down as party is humiliated

with the ill-planned dismissal of the government. In the ensuing haggling with the State Duma (lower house), which twice rejected Mr Kiriyenko's nomination,

Mr Yeltsin entered into a lengthy dialogue with its leadership. 'He has established a precedent of consultation with the Duma,' said one diplomatic source. 'An invisible barrier has been crossed.'

With a presidential election only two years away, these do not sound like the words of a natural-born leader.

if he had lost, Mr Yeltsin would have exercised his constitutional right to appoint Mr Kiriyenko.

Under the constitution, the parliament would have automatically been dissolved, preceding early elections. Last night, the youthful premier's opponents were left to fight off the certain criticism that they copped out, motivated by the desire to hang on to their comfortable, perk-rich Moscow jobs.

Mr Kiriyenko was consistently opposed by the liberal group, Yabloko, which agreed to abstain – tantamount to a 'no' vote. The Communists seem likely to argue that they did the same. Even this was a flagrant defiance of their leadership's call for an outright 'no' vote. Moreover, some also clearly voted in favour.

Mr Zyuganov, once seen as a real challenger for the Kremlin, was left groping for an explanation. The ballot – which, critically, was held in secret – was 'unfair'. 'Everyone wavered again,' he said. 'It should have been an open vote so that everyone's stand is clear and visible.'

With a presidential election



Sergei Kiriyenko applauds during yesterday's parliamentary session which confirmed him as prime minister. Photograph: AP

The first task: shake off image as president's lapdog

By Phil Reeves

THE man who is now officially only a heart beat away from controlling Russia's ooclear button is a quietly spoke manager who has spent less than a year in the shark pool of Moscow politics. Yesterday's vote by the Russian parliament formally confirmed Sergei Kiriyenko as Prime Minister at the tender age of 35 at a staff

tic that has led to a chorus of complaints that he is too inexperienced.

When he was first thrust into the limelight by President Boris Yeltsin a month ago, there was universal astonishment. Little was known about him, beyond the fact that he had fulfilled a brief stint as fuel and energy minister, and helped found a bank in the city of Nizhny Novgorod – the stamping ground of

the first deputy prime minister, Boris Nemtsov, his friend. He also briefly headed the third biggest oil refinery, Nors.

The rest of his biography was that of a dourly orthodox aspiring apparatchik: a degree from the Gorky Institute of Maritime Transport (where he studied ship building); marriage to a student sweetheart; a job with the Komsomol, the Communist Youth League. He

says he still has his Communist Party card somewhere. Since then a fuller picture has emerged, decorated with several intriguing details.

Efforts have been made to sell him to a sceptical Russian nation by portraying him as a fan of boxing, scuba diving, and Japanese martial arts. He has also yet to clarify fully claims that, as a hanker, he took part in a week-long seminar orga-

nised by the Church of Scientology and encouraged colleagues to do the same.

Mr Kiriyenko – who is partly Jewish – has firmly denied any connections, but has not addressed the issue in detail. The task ahead will be to shake off the impression that he is Boris Yeltsin's lapdog. In a clumsy effort to appear beholden to no party, he himself has reinforced his image as Kremlin puppet by

declaring allegiance to no one but the president himself.

According to Mr Yeltsin's former bodyguard, Alexander Korzhakov, he is also indebted to the president's daughter and adviser, Tatiana. His connection with Russia's first family was forged doing oil business with her husband, says Mr Korzhakov. Yet, despite a manner which is about as flashy as a pencil sharpener, the new prime

minister's speeches to an angry parliament in the last month were clear-cut and business-like.

He tackles questions with the almost irritating efficiency of a desk clerk brushing off an enraged customer, quoting the rule book from memory. As he made his final appearance yesterday, grinning occasionally at his opponents, he showed that he is a tougher cookie than most previously imagined.

Nigeria prepares for trouble at polls

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Paramilitary forces spread throughout Nigeria yesterday over concerns that voting today could trigger violence between supporters of the military junta and pro-democracy activists.

About 50 million people are registered to vote. But two million

explained explosions this week which left nine people dead, along with the threat of violence, boycotts and overall political apathy may keep turnout at the polls very low. Last year, about 10 per cent of the electorate turned out to vote in state assembly elections.

The elections for Nigeria's Senate and House of Representatives come just days after the military ruler General Sani Abacha became the sole candidate for presidential elections planned for August.

Claiming that General Abacha manipulated the nomi-

nation process to eliminate any competition, opposition groups have called for a boycott of all elections. Although today's election was touted as a key element in Nigeria's transition from military to civilian rule, government opponents say the process is flawed.

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Father 'injected son with Aids'

IN ONE of the more horrific and bizarre cases to come out of the United States, a 31-year-old laboratory assistant from St Louis, Missouri, has pleaded not guilty to a charge of first-degree assault for allegedly injecting his infant son with the HIV virus. The suspected motive was to avoid paying child support, writes Mary Dejevsky in Washington.

According to the child's mother, who remains anonymous to protect the identity of the child, her ex-husband told her not to bother asking for child support because the boy would not live very long.

Now seven, the child was diagnosed with full-blown AIDS in 1996, after years of tests had failed to establish the reason for his constant ill-health. Police now say the boy's father, Brian Stewart, deliberately injected him with a syringe of HIV-infected blood when he was 11 months old. They believe the incident took place in 1992, when the boy was in a St Louis hospital being treated for a breathing problem. Stewart was divorcing his wife and reportedly questioned whether the child was his. Witnesses have said they saw Stewart acting suspiciously at the hospital.

He was charged on Thursday after a two-year investigation which began when doctors at the hospital questioned how the child had contracted AIDS.

'After eliminating all possible ways that this kid could obtain the HIV virus, with the threats the father made it was determined that he was the suspect,' the county police chief, Douglas Saulters, said. 'It's something that's monstrous.'

Stewart, who is in prison trying to raise the \$500,000 bail payment, has denied the accusations. His lawyer decried the publicity attending the case. 'My client has maintained all along that he is innocent,' he said. 'I believe him.' He complained Stewart had already been convicted by the media.

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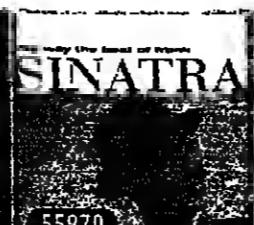
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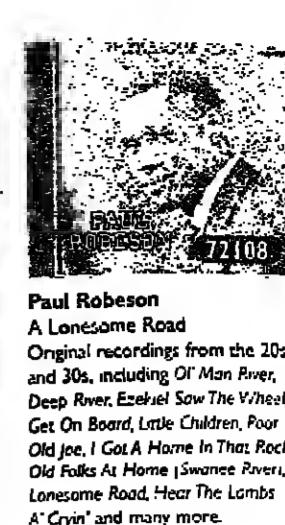
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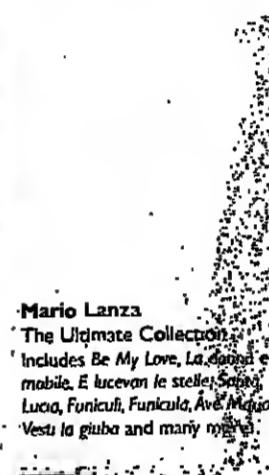
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Includes Be My Love, La Vie En Rose, I'm In Love, Dance Bohemia Dance, Let There Be Love, I'd Rather Dance, Those Lazy Happy Days Of Summer, St Louis Blues, Let's Fall In Love, Pretend, Moon River and many more.



Nat King Cole
Unforgettable
Unforgettable, It's All In The Game, Dance Bohemia Dance, Let There Be Love, I'd Rather Dance, Those Lazy Happy Days Of Summer, St Louis Blues, Let's Fall In Love, Pretend, Moon River and many more.

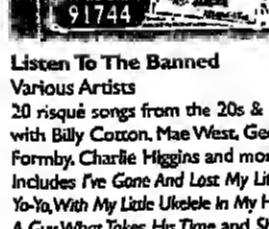


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Reinhardt & Grappelli Quintessental
20 risqué songs from the 20s & 30s, with Billy Cotton, Mae West, George Formby, Charlie Higgins and more. Includes I've Gone And Lost My Little Yo-Yo, With My Little Ukulele In My Hand, A Guy What Takes His Time and She Was Only The Postman's Daughter.

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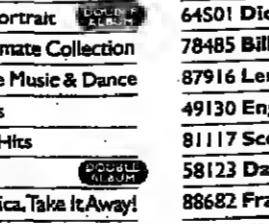
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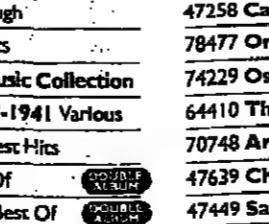
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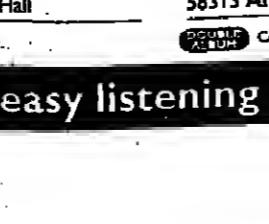
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Genocide executions in Rwanda

By Rupert Cornwell

IGNORING appeals from the Pope, the United States and the European Union, Rwanda yesterday went ahead with the public executions of 22 people condemned to death over the 1994 genocide in which up to 1 million people – one-seventh of the country's population – were slaughtered.

The first sentences were carried out in the capital, Kigali, where thousands watched as a batch of four Hutu convicts were led out to face a firing squad in a football stadium. Dressed in

'We are not sadists. There is a legacy of political ruthlessness. Justice must be done'

pink uniforms, the three men and one woman were tied to posts, black hoods fastened over their heads, and white t-inds with targets tied around their chests.

For two minutes, according to eyewitnesses, the crowds booted and jeered. Then, at 10.49am, blue-uniformed policemen with rifles walked up and shot the four from a range of barely one yard. After the firing, the spectators fell silent for a moment before breaking out in cheers.

"God is good," one spectator cried out, while another commented that: "This is justice, but it's not enough. It would have been better to cut off their fingers one at a time, and then kill them slowly." Such is the inevitable, persisting thirst for revenge after the rampages four years ago of Hutu extremists and

The hostility spilled over onto foreign journalists. In an effort to minimise international outcry, the authorities forbade reporters in Kigali to record the executions, and confiscated film from news agency photographers. At the sites, some foreign reporters said they were harassed by civilian spectators.

Prayer vigil: A Tibetan Buddhist nun praying in front of the United Nations headquarters in New Delhi for six fellow Tibetans who entered their 46th day of a hunger strike yesterday

Photograph: John McConnico/AP

Shabby tiger claims to have swapped capitalism for contentment

BANGKOK DIARY
Stephen Vines



Stephen Vines

IT IS hard not to feel sympathy for the poor old Thai government, which has inherited a currency going through the floor, a stock market which even the rats are deserting and very serious problems of unemployment. Governments have different ways of tackling crises but in most cases they pursue a strategy of lowering expectations so that whatever is achieved looks that much better. The government of Chuan Leekpai has decided that Thailand no longer aspires to having a tiger economy but will make do with a "contented economy". Out goes export-led growth, in

comes contentment. The contented economy will focus on Thailand's rural roots. It is not quite clear whether the change in terminology will suffice to

pull Thailand out of recession, though it may instill some realism. A friend in the wine importing business tells me that things are so bad that what are known as members of the "hi-so" (high society or chic) are replacing their French vintages with wines from somewhere called the New World; apparently a reference to the former British colonies of America and Australia.

Even though the economy is undeniably bad news it has eased the world's worst traffic gridlock. Some of the easing has come thanks to the opening of

new flyovers but most is down to the fact that second and third cars of the city's middle class are now being firmly locked inside garages or even sold at the quaintly named weekend market of the "previously rich" where there are some fabulous bargains to be had in low mileage Mercedes Benz and other luxury cars. The relatively free flow of the traffic has transformed the city. Journeys across town can be accomplished without taking a copy of *War and Peace* to fill the long hours sitting in traffic jams. Trade has ground to a halt in portable toilets for those caught short in mid-jam.

THE crisis is great news for religion, more specifically a certain kind of religion which might be described as a more evangelical form of Buddhism. Natayada in Songkhla, a columnist for the *Nation* newspaper in Bangkok, notes that he has "never seen as much public interest in religion as there is now". This is really something because Thais are so slouches when it comes to religious observance. It is deeply dug into the routine of daily life. What is new is the mass attendance at some of the temples with charismatic monks such as Wat Dhammakaya where, at a recent fes-

tival, an estimated 100,000 worshippers were in attendance. As Mr Natayada acutely observes, "because capitalist values have failed to bring happiness – for many people, in the past year, they have brought more grief. People start to look for something to give a meaning to life".

If this newspaper can be of no service to its readers contemplating a trip to Thailand other than this one tip, it will have done its duty. The advice is simple: avoid visiting the "Land of Smiles" during the Thai new year, known as Songkran, which usually occurs

in mid-April. Songkran is also a water festival. In the old days it meant a playful splash of water in the streets making passers-by get a little wet. These days a battery of pump actions water guns, buckets and motorised water guns means that passers-by are more likely to get completely drenched as they go about their business. Matters came to a head this year in the holiday town of Pattaya where the wife of a Finnish diplomat caused a national furor by slapping a child who drenched her in water after she asked him not to. News of the slap produced a nasty stand off as the Finns were surrounded by a hostile crowd. The situation was finally defused, but not without a humble apology by the woman in question and assurances that Thai-Finnish relations were not at stake. Newspaper editorials blasted the *farang* or foreigner for not being sensitive to Thai customs; the Finnish Embassy went into full damage limitation mode. Then the backlash began. Worthy citizens called up radio stations and wrote to newspapers letting it be known that they too were fed up with being drenched during Songkran. Water hooliganism must end, they demanded. We'll see what happens next year.



Japanese recession fails to ruffle Hashimoto

By Richard Lloyd Parry
in Tokyo

NO ONE would claim Ryutaro Hashimoto has been having an easy time, but it is a measure of the political paralysis in Tokyo that after one of the roughest periods in Japanese memory he is still Prime Minister.

To any other country he would be on the ropes, if not out for the count. Yesterday, after more than a week of dithering, he finally came up with the details of a 20 trillion yen (about £900b) programme of tax cuts and public spending which has pleased almost no one.

Mr Hashimoto's Liberal Democrat Party (LDP) is divided over it. Japanese business appears to have little confidence in the prime minister, and a leader of a powerful business association said this week that Mr Hashimoto should resign.

On the same day, the previously supportive *Yomiuri* newspaper expressed its disgust, and compared Japan under Mr Hashimoto's rule to the *Titanic* just before it hit the iceberg. Above all, his opinion poll ratings are at a record low of below 40 per cent, less than two months before elections to the Upper House. But for all this, the most remarkable and depressing thing about Mr Hashimoto is how safe he looks.

The situation is not all Mr Hashimoto's fault. The reasons for Japan's slow-down, since the heights of the "bubble economy" in the 1980s, are deep-rooted and Mr Hashimoto seems genuinely to wish to reform the economy, and the over-regulation in which it is mired. For weeks, independent economists and foreign governments have been urging Japan to cut taxes and press on with the "Big Bang", a rolling programme intended to open the financial system up to competition and improve its efficiency.

But powerful vested interests

stand to lose out in the reforms and many have representatives in the LDP. One wing of the party favours tax cuts bigger than those unveiled yesterday, another favours reining in public spending. LDP members on all sides are concerned to direct as much as possible of the new money in the direction of their own constituencies and pet projects.

But there are few credible challengers to Mr Hashimoto. The Foreign Minister, Keizo Obuchi, is spoken of as a possible successor but he is an uncharismatic, if amiable, figure with none of Mr Hashimoto's



Hashimoto: Looks safe despite calls to resign

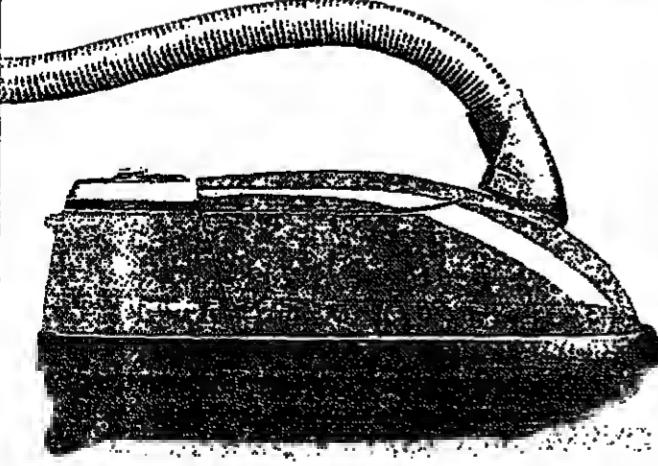
fire and drive. The most prominent opposition leader, Naoto Kan, an ambitious reformer who compares himself to Tony Blair, is popular. But the anti-LDP parties are divided.

"There's a prevailing sense of distrust with all politicians," says the political commentator, Minoru Morita. "The feeling of hopelessness, the sense that there's nothing we can do, reminds me of August 1945, after the end of the war."

John Neuffer, a political analyst at Mitsui Marine Research, said: "The real question is whether the government is going to bite the bullet, and start dividing out the pain. They've never done that before. They've just made people feel good for 50 years."

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Dutroux escape pushes Belgium into crisis



National outrage: Belgian newspapers yesterday reflected their country's sense of shame and anger as the government came under mounting public pressure over the escape of the alleged child-killer Marc Dutroux

Photograph: Philippe Huguen/AFP

By Katherine Butler
in Brussels

BELGIUM'S political crisis intensified yesterday despite the recapture of "public enemy number one" Marc Dutroux and the sacking of two senior government ministers held responsible for the shocking blunders which allowed him to escape for several hours on Thursday.

Dutroux, awaiting trial for the abduction, rape and murder of four young girls whose bodies were found buried on his property, spent an afternoon on the run after a bizarre lapse in security at the regional courthouse where he had been taken to consult his case files.

It later emerged that the guns carried by his guards were not loaded and that his handcuffs had been removed, facilitating his getaway and the two car-jackings he carried out. Police were so disorganized they had to requisition a passing car to give chase initially. The Gendarmerie yesterday blamed "budgetary reasons" for the fact that only two officers were assigned to watch Dutroux.

Despite the unprecedented ministerial resignations, opposition deputies clamoured for the entire government to stand down and tabled a motion of no confidence which will go to a vote on Tuesday.

Prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene's centre-left coalition may survive this vote by a narrow margin but there are signs that the fragile governmental consensus could nevertheless collapse amid mounting tensions between the ruling factions over the direction of police, judicial, and constitutional reform.

Public pressure for more heads to roll mounted as leaders of the "white committees" - a grassroots movement formed last year after the Dutroux scandal broke - called on Belgians to take to the streets. Demonstrators were gathering last night at the Palais

government's failure to deliver on promises of reform. The most glaring faults of the police and judiciary were brought to light months ago by a parliamentary inquiry but nothing much has changed.

"Unforgivable" summed up the banner headline in the daily *La Lanterne*. "Shame" was the headline on a front-page editorial in *Le Soir*, while *La Libre Belgique* said the event summed up the "pathology" underlying Belgium.

The Dutch-speaking press also reflected mounting Flemish frustration at the "artificial" political construction which many feel has lumbered them with a corrupt and decrepit "other half" - the Walloon French-speaking side of Belgium. There was anger that the two sacked ministers, Johan Vande Lanotte and Stefaan de Clerck, in charge of the interior and justice, were both Flemish, even though most of the incompetence and corruption, and of course the crimes, have been traced to the French speaking cities of Liege, Namur and Charleroi.

Some observers were betting yesterday Mr Dehaene would stake the survival of his coalition on an emergency package of reforms which have up to now been blocked by inter-party wrangling. But the landscape could "change dramatically" said Bart Sturewagen of *De Standaard* the Flemish daily, if people take to the streets again.

'Anyone with responsibility, either direct or indirect, should resign'

de Justice in Brussels where a floral shrine to Dutroux's young victim carried a placard calling on the government to resign.

Elio Di Rupo, the deputy prime minister, fuelled demands for the police chief, Willy Deridder, to be sacked. "Anyone with responsibility, either direct or indirect, must resign," he said.

The Brussels media yesterday cried out for answers and reflected national outrage at the

Auction of Goya letter highlights mystery of Spain's royal treasures

By Elizabeth Nash
in Madrid

THE sale at auction in London recently of a letter, written by the artist Goya to a minister at the Spanish court in 1801, has infuriated Goya experts who accuse the Spanish authorities of negligently letting the document and other treasures go missing from royal archives.

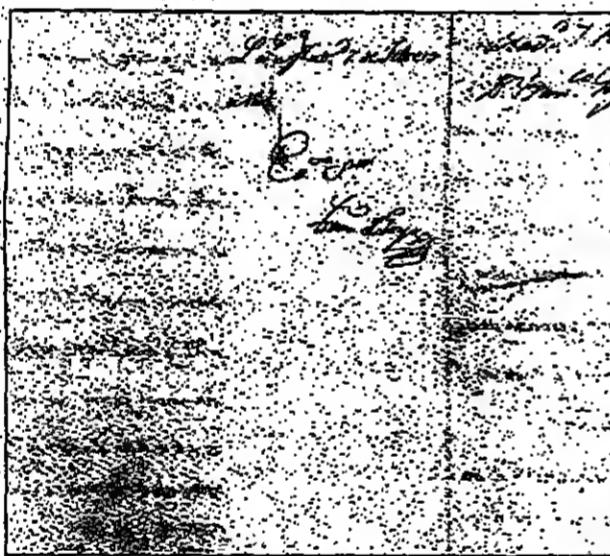
Their anger is all the greater because the letter, described as "rare" and "important", in Sotheby's catalogue for its sale of 31 March, had been sold privately in 1991. The experts complained then to the royal palace in Madrid, but never received a reply.

"This kind of letter, addressed to a minister of state, not just to a private individual, almost never comes on to the market unless it has been stolen from a state archive," says Nigel Glendinning, retired professor of 18th-century Spanish literature at London University and author of several books on Goya. "I wrote and sent evidence... when Christie's auctioned the same letter on 26 June 1991, alerting the Spanish authorities to the loss and urging them to act. But they never even replied." Sotheby's put the estimated value of the letter at £15,000 to £20,000.

Professor Glendinning emphasises that no blame attaches to Sotheby's, which went ahead with the sale because it heard nothing from Madrid. "They told me they would have withdrawn the letter from sale if they had received a fax from the royal palace that morning, but I only heard about the sale the day before and it was too late. I also urged the cultural attaché at the Spanish embassy in London to do whatever he could. Nothing came of that either."

The professor's dismay is shared by Juliet Wilson-Barrett, considered the world's top Goya expert, who curated exhibitions in Madrid for the Prado and the city's National Library. "One has been aware of things going missing. One wondered how things had found their way into private hands. To have off documents from their archive files is a disaster for researchers. It's particularly horrifying in the present case, when the authorities had already been alerted on a previous occasion. No action seems to have been taken since the last episode, when we all got very agitated and were assured an investigation was being made. But it all fizzled out."

The contents of the letter by Goya, chief court painter, to the



Goya's letter to the king's minister. Photograph: Sotheby's

king's minister Pedro Céballos, offer an insight into palace intrigues and battles over the care of royal paintings. In 1800 several people offered to restore paintings in the collection and King Carlos, and his minister, Don Pedro, asked Goya for his opinion. Goya dismissed the applicants' technical skill, saying their methods were not new and caused more damage than they prevented.

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The Prado was among those

that bid for the letter, without knowing its provenance was dodgy, when Christie's offered it for sale in 1991, says Manuela Mena, head of 18th-century Spanish painting at the Prado and a Goya specialist, who at the time was the museum's deputy director. "But it went above what we could afford and we lost it." Soon afterwards, Ms Mena says: "I was offered by a private dealer some 15 Goya original documents that bore the serial numbers of the palace archives." Police secured the return of most but the palace never explained how it lost them. She adds that there was silence when a Velázquez painting went missing from the palace some years ago. But why, if the palace knew this Goya letter was missing from its archive, did it take no action when it came up for sale a second time? "I don't know, it's shameful. It's a mystery what goes on there," Ms Mena said.

A facsimile of the four-page letter is reproduced in the official magazine of the Patrimonio Nacional (National Heritage), *Reales Sitios*, XVII, No 64, 1980, pp 66-67. It illustrates an article by Marcelino Tobajas headed "Documents of the Palace Archive. 1800: Goya and a pictorial war in the former King's residence of the Buen Retiro." The Buen Retiro, a former dependency of the royal palace, today houses the Prado's 19th-century collection. Footnote 14 of Tobajas's article cites "Buen Retiro, Carlos IV, Bundle number 9" as the main source of documents quoted, including Goya's letter. The authorities of the Patrimonio Nacional at the Royal Palace in Madrid, pressed since 31 March for information about how the letter came to be extracted from their archive, said after repeated prodding that they were investigating the matter.

The Prado was among those

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Poisoned Tigris spreads tide of death in Iraq

By Patrick Cockburn

16/25/98

WHEN Hulagu, the grandson of Genghis Khan, sacked Baghdad in 1258 Iraqis say the water in the river Tigris changed colour twice. On the first day it turned red with the blood of the thousands slaughtered by the Mongols; on the second it went black because of the ink from the books - from what were then the greatest libraries in the world - which Hulagu threw into the river.

Now the Tigris has changed colour again. It is a rich *café au lait* brown, because raw sewage from 3.5 million people in Baghdad and cities upstream is entering the river. As with the Mongols the new colour implies disaster. Contamination of drinking water is the main reason why the proportion of Iraqi children who die before they reach 12 months old has risen from 3.7 per cent in the year before sanctions were imposed in 1990 to 12 per cent today.

"The infrastructure is collapsing," says Denis Halliday, the UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator for Iraq. "Electric power is 40 per cent of what it used to be. This affects drinkable water supplies and infant mortality." In the flat Iraqi countryside everything, both water and sewage, must be pumped. There are few wells. Almost all water must come from the Tigris and Euphrates and both get progressively dirtier as they pass through the cities of Iraq on their way to the sea.

In Diyala province, east of the capital, last week, a woman named Nuhir Mohammed was clambering down the side of an irrigation canal with a steel bucket to get water. "It is bad water, of course," she said. "It gives you stomach pains and hurts the kidneys, but the purified water supply was cut off in 1991." Heliathan Alwan, a farmer from the same village, said he had recently visited the nearest town to see if they could restore the drinking water but was told it was impossible.

A visit to the main water plant



Business is brisk for this Tigris ferryman because petrol rationing has forced Baghdad's citizens to mothball their cars. Photograph: AFP

showed why. The technician in charge was away and we were shown around by a watchman who said he earned £3 a month. He lived beside the plant in a mud-and-reed house, which looked exactly like those inhabited by ancient Sumerians 3,000 years ago. Half the pumps were not working and those that were had been repaired by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In Baghdad, Evaristo Oliveira, a water and sanitation engineer with the Red Cross, says the main problem in supplying water are lack of spare parts, absence of staff and poor electrical supply. He said: "I have been in plants where there are naked electrical wires carrying a high current and the only insulation is plastic bags."

Denis Halliday says that his office has estimated that \$10bn (£6bn) is needed to restore Iraq's electrical system, but only \$300m can be afforded.

He adds: "We have generators which are 20 years old. Who we go to the manufacturers either they don't make the spare parts any more

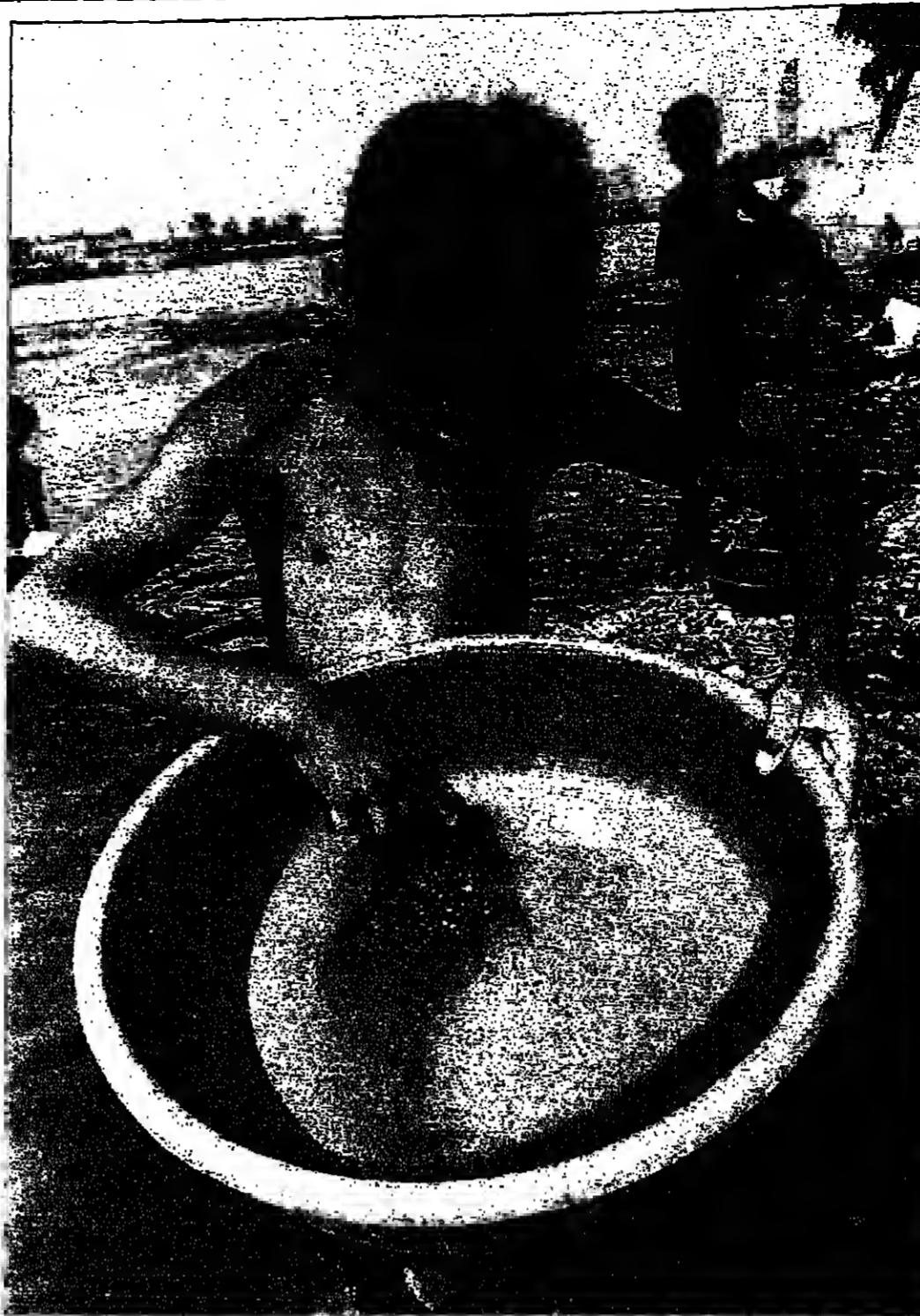
or they don't want to sell them."

Given that Iraq has the capacity to export only \$4bn worth of oil every six months it is unlikely that the Iraqi electrical system will be restored any time soon. In the meantime, Baghdad has power cuts of about five or six hours a day - a figure which rises to 14-16 hours in the countryside.

In what was once a prosperous village called al-Yaat on the banks of the Diyala river, Buhra's Hussein al-Sayef explained the effect of the lack of electricity and water on his community of 300 people.

The small water purification plant has long ceased working. They now pump contaminated irrigation water directly to their homes. Mr Al-Sayef said: "Last year some of our fields dried and because we did not have enough electricity to pump water to them, we had to abandon them."

In theory, people in Al-Yaat should be better off than almost anybody else in Iraq. They have rich land, grow their own food and can take advantage of high prices in the city. Mr Al-Sayef said life was not



Searching task An Iraqi boy panning the polluted waters of the Tigris for lost gold and valuables. Such is the poverty that Iraqis are having to resort to ever more desperate measures. Photograph: Reuters

quite like that. He introduced his cousin Ahmed, a visibly ailing 24-year-old who had been operated on at the Cromwell Hospital in London in 1985 for heart problems. He was meant to have further surgery, but the family had not been able to pay for it.

Other farmers say that, along with the deterioration of the water and electricity supply, the collapse of the Iraqi medical system is their main problem. "I am desperate."

said Ali Ahmed Suwaidan, as he stood in his farmyard in the nearby village of al-Aitha. He held out old x-rays of the head of his five-year-old daughter Fatima, who was playing at his feet. "There is something wrong with her balance," he explained. "She cannot stand up." He held her upright for a moment and then removed his hands. Fatima immediately crumpled.

"Everybody here feels gloomy and depressed because of the results

of sanctions," says Mr Al-Sayef. "That is probably why so many people fall ill."

The reasons for the depression are obvious enough: "For most Iraqis the pleasant things of life are missing," says Denis Halliday. Iraqis need to look forward to more than getting just enough to eat to stay alive. He says that when Iraqi children were asked in a poll what they would like for their birthday, most said they wanted an egg.

Serbs kill 23 in Kosovo

FEDERAL troops hunting "terrorists" had killed 23 pro-independence ethnic Albanian militants in Serbia's Kosovo province, the Yugoslav Army said yesterday.

Two Albanians were captured and ammunition was seized when the army engaged about 200 "Albanian terrorists" on Thursday, the Yugoslav Army said.

The high death-toll - and a resounding Serb vote in a referendum on Thursday against foreign mediation in the Kosovo crisis - ratcheted up tension in the Albanian-dominated province. Referendum results released yesterday had 94.73 per cent of the Serbs who voted rejecting outside mediation in talks between Serbian government officials and Kosovo's Albanian leaders on the province's future.

— AP, Pristina

Spaced out

RUSSIA's failure to meet its pledges could delay by up to three years the international space station. An independent advisory board, appointed by NASA, concluded that the US share of the project would climb to about \$24.7bn.

Hardware for the international space station is being built by 16 nations on four continents. The principal partners are the United States, Russia, Japan, Canada and the European Space Agency.

— AP, Washington

Harare riots

RIOT police yesterday fought running battles at Harare's University of Zimbabwe with students trying to march into town to protest against Wednesday's shooting of a student by a police officer.

Witnesses said the police, armed with shotguns, batons and shields, tear-gassed students who tried to march to the city centre. Police sealed all campus exits to students.

— Reuters, Harare

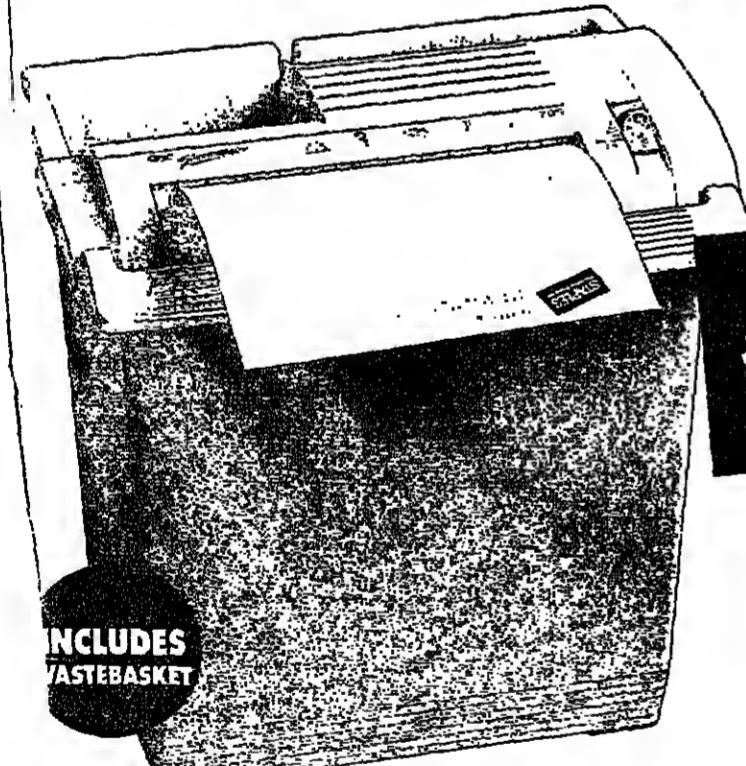
Dark horse

THE racehorse Tulya Tsan was withdrawn hours before she was due to race in Wellington today after the racing authorities discovered the name spelled backwards could be offensive, the *Evening Post* reported. She was renamed Ben Again and returned to the track.

— AP, Wellington

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Spaced out

Harare riots

Dark horse

EXT Saturday Brighton will wake up in its mimetic weekend way. Gulls will settle in mewling grey tatters over glittering bangles of squashed onion rings by the Palace Pier. Manly geezers will leg it up St James's Street glugging cans of Nurnishment to make sure other manly geezers know that they've been largin' it with the latest drop-the-lot pill posse at the Escape Club.

Behind a flaking Regency facade, a retired tea planter will have that damnable Darjeeling flashback for the thousandth time. In the tatty New Steine district scores of £20-a-Nite bedsteads will begin to judder and squinch with the approach of statutory orgasms coddled in static-rich velvet trimmings and the first clammy niffs from lard spazzling in breakfast kitchens which have become Mission Controls for the real F-phrase: the Full English.

And who among this human confetti will spare a thought for the Brighton Festival, which will begin that very day to scatter its largesse – 800 events in Britain's second biggest arts festival, running until 24 May? Will they care a fig about its remarkably rich visual arts, cutting-edge theatre and dance, highly ambitious four-day street theatre programme, concerts and a raft of intriguing fringe shows?

In a place that remains almost literally underwritten by the ghostly prose of the likes of Graham Greene and Patrick Hamilton – brilliant, prescient toffs with a taste for Brighton's less than refined aspects – the arts remains ambered in a peculiar half-light. They are accepted as transient phenomena in an urban petri dish crammed with competing cultural activity that comes and goes like flotsam on a tide of cool unconcern.

These remarks would go down like a rancid blowlash on Meissen plates with a certain tranche of Brighton and Hove's 250,000 inhabitants. When not skirmishing about rose plantings in their elegant private gardens, there may be those behind the Grade I facades of Sussex Square and Leveson Crescent with an intimate knowledge of Zola – the writer, not the footballer; or others, taking the air in Montpelier Villas, who think that Noel Coward is simply divine, or still more, sitting mummified in best bibs and tuckers at One Paston Place before a plate of *A la Recherche du Tempore Perdu* ('Of course there's nothing on the plate, madam, that's the whole point') who think Nigel's haircuts are a slap in the face for

Attractions: From left, Reuben Mednikoff's *The Stairway to Paradise* is at Hove Museum and Art Gallery from 2 May-5 July; Forkbeard's *The Barbers of Surreal* is at the Gardner Centre on 10-11 May; Rosas present *Mikrokosmos* also at the Gardner Centre 18-19 May and at the festival from 2-24 May

Peerless Brighton

Once every year Brighton shrugs off its seaside image and glories in the arts. Jay Merrick picks out the hottest tickets in town

Yehudi after all he done – er, sorry, has done – for that ungrateful boy. Despite a demonstrably art-prone populace leavened with more than 20,000 tertiary-level students, the Brighton Festival remains an exercise in excellence in a town where "excellent" is often used not as a superlative but as an insouciant general-purpose punctilio.

In Edinburgh, which does not suffer for the estimated five million impeded one-and two-night *liaisons amoureuses* that Brighton's kiss-my-quick economy depends on annually, tickets for the majority of festival events are typically sold out within

The festival hinges on something fundamentally richer than hired guns – its own local talent, often dazzlingly ephemeral

days. One imagines an endless Edinburgh vista of Morningside sitting rooms crammed with tartan-clad *Tamagochi* wailing: "Give one culture, and rate noo! One cannae get enough!" There is no Royal Mile in Brighton, just a dense architectural cut-up: the grubby carotid artery of Western Road, the vicious architectural head-butts known as Churchill Square, the ghost-ship superstructure of Embassy Court and interjections of increasingly threadbare Georgian and Regency terraces.

The natives do not gag for art and expression. They take it for granted; it's no different to street life –

stuff just happens. And so the festival, or anything else in the town that might resemble a pukka branding exercise, has to deliver a special brew, a cultural six-pack with a sharp local tang.

Not that the festival lacks A-list attractions. The classical music programme includes the best orchestras from Detroit, London and Berlin, along with the Tokyo String Quartet and John Tomlinson in Boris Godunov.

The written word is covered by a lit-gilt crew headed by Nick Hornby, Maya Angelou, Hanif Kureishi and Jung Chang. The supporting cast includes Glen Baxter, Nicholson Baker, and local resident Julie Burchill. You might even catch her

"live" shopping.

The linked Chardinton Festival presents Jeanette Winterson, Alison Lurie, Barbara Trapido and a lauvie-fest with Eileen Atkins, and Simon Callow "doing" Ms Woolf and Mr Strachey.

In a typical bit of counter-weighting, Five Mondays in May presents new play readings at the not-Bloomsbury Rock Inn.

The festival's list of well-known artists seems well-stuffed in every field. Lee Evans is one of a gaggle of familiar comedy headliners. The dance programme by

Nicolas Broomfield

by Macmillan on the same day. The 34 volume, leather-bound set took 15 years to compile and is lavish in its attention to modern art, with 4 million words devoted to the 20th century. But when I looked up Hirst in the index I found he merited just one entry, and that was exactly two words: his name in a list of Goldsmith College graduates. Bring back the medicine cabinet. Damien needs an aspirin.

Lord Archer, producer of Dame Edna Everage's extravaganza, had a puzzling entry in the programme when the show opened at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, on Tuesday. Detailing his long association with the theatre, it chronicled how he "travelled to the Old Vic in Bristol" to watch Peter O'Toole, "as a schoolboy he moved on to Stratford to watch Laurence Olivier." He has "an abiding memory of Edith Evans playing one of her many Queens." But hang on – this is all just watching theatre. It means that I can claim a long association not just with theatre, but with cinema, opera, ballet and football. What renaissance people we can all be.

Damien Hirst saw his medicine cabinet fetch £180,000 at Christie's on Wednesday, but his happiness might have been short-lived if he had peeked at the £10,000 Dictionary Of Art published

WHATEVER else you say about the new Radio 4 schedules, you have to admit that they don't include *Week Ending*: the mangy old cur has been blundering into the furniture, coughing up hairballs and puking on the carpets for long enough, and somebody has finally decided to take the kindless way. Unfortunately, the new topical puppy that replaces it, *The Beaton Generation* (Radio 4, Sunday), isn't properly house-trained and reacts to burglars by showing off its repertoire of tricks – or, to put it more directly, Alastair Beaton and his comedy chums seem more interested in establishing that they know a lot about politics than in actually saying anything amusing or salutary about it. I give it three weeks to get funny, and then I'm shoving it in a cardboard box and dumping it in a river.

I don't give much for its chances, though, while it's being recorded live at Ronnie Scott's club. There are come-

ries – *Old Harry's Game* on

Tuesday nights, is one – which

can overcome that handicap of a studio audience. But for

The Beaton Generation, as for

Thursday evening's newcomer,

Bussman and Quantick Kingsize, recorded

particular interest of festival director Chris Barron – looks sharp, with appearances by Mikrokosmos and the combined Cholmondeleys and Featherstonehaughs, who will premiere *Beach Huts*. Mr Barron's scouting trip to China also unearthed

ic Angelus in St Peter's Church, a richly complex singing in tongues which fused blissed-out township *a cappella* with Gregorian chant and folk themes. No appearance this year, alas, but they can be seen on second-hand books in the shop with no name in Queen's Road; throns of stylishly wasted Saturday morning floaters in Kensington Gardens; Gary what's blowing his looped, Coltraneish scales out of a soprano sax during a downpour in Pavilion Gardens; a wacky grinning moun in The Mongolian Barbeque

group is probably the best known, with Harvey Daniels heading the usual suspects.

But by definition, it will be the

Brighton is an urban petri dish crammed with competing cultural activity that comes and goes like flotsam on a tide of cool unconcern

less heralded who will spring the surprises: Gary Sollars massive portraits at the old Evening Argus building is a must; as is the open house at the flaky Phoenix Gallery.

Not even passing house-hunters are safe: those who wander into Bonet's estate agents in Kempston will be temporarily Zimmered by Brian Stacey's deranged tableaux. A soothing antidote can be administered by visiting Ditchling Museum, where the exquisite glazes on Yoshi Hamada's pottery are like meniscus floating between physical fact and the void.

It is typical of "excellent" Brighton that its strongest home-

brew, the visual arts, has no dedicated exhibition space – though Mr Barron's just-announced scheme for a multi-million pound Lottery-funded makeover of the Dome complex is poised to give the town the best music, dance and exhibition centre in the south.

Even so, high art may never be the needle in Brighton's dishevelled arts haystack because lo-fi variants give the kind of loose, funky fit favoured in a town where theatre, music and artifice has a more natural affinity with the tangled braid of the borough's defining flavours: dead air in the used clothes shops in the North Lanes; the tap-dancing astrologer Zembla van Veen declaiming her epic haiku cycles at the Disco Biscuit; the vast spoil-heaps of second-hand books in the shop with no name in Queen's Road; throngs of stylishly wasted Saturday morning floaters in Kensington Gardens; Gary what's blowing his looped, Coltraneish scales out of a soprano sax during a downpour in Pavilion Gardens; a wacky grinning moun in The Mongolian Barbeque

group is probably the best known, with Harvey Daniels heading the usual suspects.

Thus, street theatre may provide Brighton Festival's defining moments. Streets of Brighton 98, devised by Zap Productions, will kick-start a national tour of major centres by diverse and dynamic talents. Among the dozens of performers will be Cie Jo Bithume, a massive French troupe who will stage a multi-layered spectacular at Black Rock; Scarbeats, another French group, specialising in ethereal street art; and Steve Parry's and Cormac Dorrian's gay exposition, *Hedonism*.

And so it will come to pass that on 2 May blurred looking one-night standees will wolf their Full English and glance sheepishly at each other through mercifully greasy heat hazes in the tastefully overdecorated dining rooms of Greene Gables or Hamilton's Bide a Wee. Meanwhile, yet another dish – and a grande bouffe, at that – will be warming in Mr Barron's cramped festival kitchenette two doors down from the orange trim of Shakies Gill in the Old Steine.

That's right. It's only the Full Brighton, innit?

Brighton Festival info and booking: 01273 705771; Internet: http://www.brighton-festival.org; Brighton & Hove Fringe Festival: 01273 673777; Internet: www.brighton.co.uk/fjn



Originality: *Seven Sacraments* is a dramatic new oratorio by Nicolas Broomfield

CHRISTOPHER Frayling, the ebullient rector of the Royal College of Art, was still crowing when I ran across him this week at the poaching of Wendy Dagworthy, head of fashion, at St Martin's College and tutor to Bertrand McCutcheon to become head of fashion at the RCA.

The Royal College of Art has been a little peered for some time over St Martin's pre-eminence in fashion education, and this might pressue a change.

There is no contest, however, when it comes to car design. Christopher Frayling tells me that 200 cars since the sixties have been designed by Royal College of Art alumni.

I didn't even know there were 200 different models of car. All six members of the design team for the Korean Hyundai car were former RCA students.

I suggested to the RCA rector that he might introduce a radical form of student loan – namely that the college draw up an agreement whereby it has a share in the profits of any design evolved during a student's time there. Mr Frayling seemed rather interested in the idea. Ford, I expect, may be less so.

**DAVID LISTER
ARTS
DIARY**

Culture Secretary Chris Smith is soon to publish a memoir of his first year in office, charting no doubt the rise of Cool Britannia. I hope the book mentions a small press briefing I attended in his office on Tuesday as it could yet prove to be the moment the government's attempt to be cool and youthful fell flat on its face. One of the policy initiatives Mr Smith told us about was sending "live" extracts from Shakespeare and opera into nightclubs. The RSC said it would expose actors to ridicule. But anyone under 30 would have spotted that the idea was doomed. Nightclubs are expensive places in luxury hotels where Tony Bennett and Shirley Bassey sing. Young people go to clubs.

Damien Hirst saw his medicine cabinet fetch £180,000 at Christie's on Wednesday, but his happiness might have been short-lived if he had peeked at the £10,000 Dictionary Of Art published

**ROBERT HANKS
THE WEEK
IN RADIO**

"live" at London's exclusive Imperial Rooms, Mayfair, the combination of disproportionate hilarity and poor sound quality is fatal. The audience reaction to Bussman and Quantick was emphatic enough to make me feel I was being told when to laugh – particularly, boisterously when, as happened once or twice, more subtle jokes were greeted with uneasy silence. It's hard to avoid the suspicion that the audiences at these venues are a tad too drunk to get the finer points. But it isn't only in comedy that audiences have made their presence felt. Even *The Reith Lectures* (Wednesday) have succumbed, this year delivered in front of an audience for the first time in history. Actually, as Radio 4's *Soundings* – *Old Harry's Game* on Tuesday nights, is one – which can overcome that handicap of a studio audience. For *The Beaton Generation*, as for Thursday evening's newcomer, *Bussman and Quantick Kingsize*, recorded

seems only to emphasise the tension and artificiality of the form (though by now, after three weeks, he seems to be loosening up a little); the sober, overtly narrative structure he gives to each lecture adds to that impression, and while he is blocked in some interesting points, the Reith Lectures have rarely felt quite so lecturey.

Underlying this new obsession with audiences is a new philosophy that insists Radio 4 needs to make the public feel involved – hence the incessant pleas to members of the public to phone, fax or e-mail their points of view which have suddenly become a feature of Radio 4's day. You could see this as an enhancement of democracy. What gets me is the sheer neediness, the desperate hunger for reassurance that people are listening.

I find myself wanting to phone up James Boyle and tell him, look, I'm not going to call you every day – we both agreed this wasn't a serious relationship. I'm not ready for commitment right now.

What do you think, readers? Should I tell him? On second thoughts, keep it to yourselves.

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Harold Thompson, 62; acting master of South Durham Hunt and farmer; married with four children

"My parents were farmers. My grandparents were farmers. I've ridden horses and hunted for as long as I can remember. I don't think anyone predicted

the landslide victory and quite how arrogant they were going to be. They are largely urban. It was obvious they were going to be anti-hunting."

"We were lucky that Foster's bill was so bloody badly drafted, it was unworkable. They were going on about hunting with dogs, they didn't specify

whether it would be just dogs or bitches allowed. With the beef on the bone law, the day after it was announced, a high-ranking official said 'look, we can't enforce this law, it's just too badly drawn up'."

"Farming has taken the biggest bashing under Labour, it's just been one body blow af-



Samantha Hallimond, 22. Lone parent of Samuel, 4. Volunteer worker for the Citizens' Advice Bureau

"WE'RE Labour supporters, our family, very much so. It was a really big thing for us when they won. I thought they'd get it; there was so much go-

ing wrong, so many problems. I think the biggest thing that they've done is the changes to benefits, especially for people like myself, lone parents."

"I wasn't too happy about the lone-parent benefit changes. All new claimants can no longer claim the lone-parent

bit of child benefit, which is about £6 a week. It's quite a bit of money that. With the new working family tax credit that's coming in, I think they're doing it to encourage people to work, especially with the child-care provision."

"Personally, I would like to wait until Sam goes to school and then I'd like to find a part-

time job. I wouldn't want to work full time. I think the first four years of a child's life are very important. You should be spending time with him."

"From my point of view the most important thing to tackle is getting single parents out to work, which I think they are trying to do by cutting benefits."

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Is he still their local hero?



Tony Blair said things could only get better.

But how has his performance gone down in his own backyard of Sedgefield? Interviews and portraits by Sarah Bancroft



Tony Blair in Trindon Labour Club with constituents during last year's campaign. Optimism at Labour's victory has been tempered by the reality of power. Photograph: David Rose



Rachel Dawson, 40, four children; married 16 years to Chris, 48. Lives on a 380-acre farm

"On election night I sat up and watched for so long, then I realised they were going to get in and went to bed."

I was horrified, completely gutted. I knew the election would affect our family, not as much from the farming as from the hunting point of view, which was a huge worry because the main source of our income is derived from hunting. But I don't think Dr Cunningham (the agriculture minister) has any love of farm-



Nora Robinson, 81; retired nurse; a southerner, she moved to her late husband's native North, two children

"WELL, we had the Conservatives for 18 years and then we had Tony Blair. It was the biggest shock because, of course, he came to prominence in this area. When Labour got in last year, I thought, well, I've had all kinds – a wartime government, Churchill, Attlee – then

suddenly after all that time, a young man.

Oh, I liked John Major, I respected him, but the jubilation that was here in this village was nobody's business. Well, because he comes here, you see. He comes up the back of my house [to the Trindon Labour Club]. You know they put up all the gadgets up, the television and the security (for the election). I feel, well, it's a change, we'll see if a broom will sweep clean. At the same time, I wondered, is he expe-

rienced enough? Because

that's the ultimate goal of any man in this country, to be Prime Minister, isn't it? Now he's got it and he's got to hold all the people together.

"I've got a bee in my bon-

net about Frank Dobson: he

doesn't know enough about

nursing and health. Our health

service is still the most

precious thing we have after

education. Education is first

because that's the future. But

our health service, no matter

what they say about it, is there

for us when we need it.

"I wish this government would leave school teachers alone. The majority of them know how to teach, they know children better than what members of parliament do.

"I would do something

about the drug thing up here.

It's like every other town and

city and its villages now. Tony

Blair has three children ... I

do think he's very aware of it

and I suppose he's like most

parents, he'll do his best for his

children."



Joe Pearce, 55, ex-wages clerk for British Rail for 22 years. Married with three children

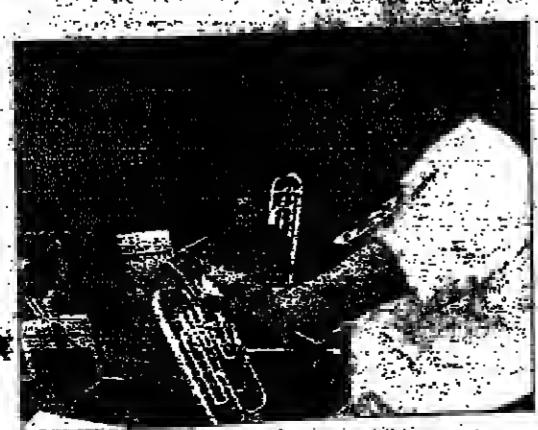
he's not the rough type, like Kinnock or Prescott, but you need these guys – they're statesmen.

"For the last 10 years I've been in and out of work. I've laboured, been down in London humping furniture ... Now I'm a care worker. I'm only guaranteed 12.5 hours, but it fluctuates between 20-28 hours, so I have to live with that. But if the country goes wealthy, I want to go with

"It's like your local team winning. There was just a feeling that people were happy. I knew that reality would soon strike through, but it was nice to watch. I think Blair has fundamental socialist views, but

The danger is that there are too many initiatives. But if the desire to change is sustained, to improve skills and education, the number and literacy of the population which is quite appalling, that have an effect. Not in the immediate future. But it's encouraging that it isn't just short-term foundations that have been allowed to crumble.

The New Deal is another five move. Trying to put the ethic back into society.



George Lundberg, 50; headmaster of St John's C of E primary school in Shildon; married with three daughters.

"I FEARED for society if Labour didn't win. I watched the election results last year with a bottle of Scotch. The sense of relief the day after! I thought Labour would bring a whole new aspect to society.

"But I was appalled about the university grant system, it's send-

ing the wrong signals. They're saying you've got to put something into it to appreciate it. I still believe it's a right. And, like every school, we were given £1,000 to spend on books: the little school in the Wear valley with 19 pupils got £1,000, just as we did with 296 pupils.

"There is still tremendous despair in the teaching profession. The ray of light is not as big as it was, but I still have a vision that things are going to get better."

AS FAR as Labour's 12 months go, the recognition that the skills base in the UK is insufficient to make this country really strong is important. The schools taskforce under David Blunkett will hopefully bring more understanding of where the deficiencies are, because it starts long before university, with the 10- and 12-year-olds.

THE INDEPENDENT
19/FEATURES

THE INDEPENDENT

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Foreseeing the present

FUTUROLOGY is an idea whose time has still, it seems, not yet arrived. It has always been easy to predict – and ridicule – ball-gazers because so much of their vision is constrained by the thinking of the times and extrapolations of existing trends and technologies. Futurology is an interesting guide, but a guide to the present, its fantasies and its discontents. We never did progress to individual hover-cars or those space-age unisex bodies advertised in Sixties comics.

The new report by the Henley Centre on life in Britain in the year 2020 is a good example of the limitations of futurology. It has been sponsored by the life insurance arm of Barclays Bank (geddit?), so it was thoroughly predictable that they would take the mickey out of Karl Marx's belief that "the fall of capitalism and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable". Like Marxism, though, the Henley Centre is very much a creature of its time. We live in a nostalgic age and this report is a piece of retro-futurology – a typical 1990s piece of recycled timidity. Why, for example, didn't we get more of a feel for the future of the great issue of our times than this passage, which makes Gordon Brown sound like Nostradamus:

"It would be foolish to rule out the possibility that the EU will succeed in introducing a single currency and that this will lead to a federal United States of Europe. However, obstacles in the path of deeper union are formidable, and a wide range of possible scenarios exist. There are competing nationalist and internationalist forces, and costs and benefits, both in the long and the short terms."

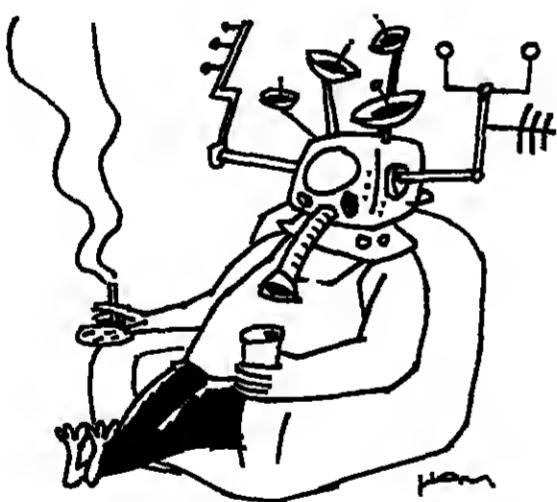
No point in rushing down to the bookies with that one, then.

Futurology was not always as tepid or hedged about as this. George Orwell created his terrifying vision of life in 1984 in 1948, at the most difficult point in the Cold War and when state control of just about everything was taken to be the natural course of events. There was a Ministry of Information during the war so a Ministry of Truth was not such a big mental leap. Before Orwell, other writers such as Aldous Huxley had projected their present concerns into the future.

Huxley found himself living in a world of rapid automation, industrial giantism and totalitarian regimes. At this distance it is quite easy to see that the *Brave New World* was the 1930s, only more so. In the 7th century AD (after Ford) we find the class system has mutated into a world of rigid castes where human beings are graded from highest intellectuals to lowest manual workers. The inhabitants of the brave new world are hatched from incubators and are conditioned to accept their social destiny, all run, of course, by a world dictator called Mustapha Mond. This was the age of Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini, and of eugenics.

There were plenty of left-wing intellectuals in the 1930s who were inspired by the Soviet Union. Like Sidney and Beatrice Webb they saw this future and thought that it worked. The Fabian socialist H G Wells didn't think that capitalism would evolve too happily. In *The Time Machine* he takes us to the year 802701, where the divisions between classes have gone beyond the world of the social scientist or even Huxley's castes and have just about evolved into separate species, the peaceful hut rather lazy Eloi (the bosses) and the underground savage race of primitives, the Morlocks (the workers). Capitalism was going to do that to us. Then too, on a more humdrum note, the widespread adoption of the electric vacuum-cleaner led us to believe that we would in time see the end of household labour, with friendly robots doing those dull chores.

So what about 1998? The Henley Centre says relatively little about class, or state control, and has no nightmares to scare us with – for which, much thanks. On technology, they have gone a hit retro, claiming that domes-



tic chores will soon be delegated to robots such as vacuum cleaners programmed to whir into action when dust reaches a set level, while remote systems will enable us to turn up the central heating or turn on the cooker from outside the home. But you could have seen much the same at the 1939 World's Fair in New York.

The Henley Centre also foresees a revolution in transport. Surprise, surprise. In 2020, wealthy people will be able to cross the globe in record time by using space shuttles to travel outside the world's atmosphere, thus cutting the journey time to Sydney to just two hours. The rest of us get to use solar-powered cars or travel on "superconductive magnetic levitation" trains capable of travelling at 350mph. This is an old trick. In the Victorian era you could shock an audience by suggesting that the day would come when men could travel at 100mph. Supertrains were being dreamt up in the 1940s whilst anyone with an old kid's annual from the 1950s won't have to look far to find jet-turbine powered supercars with bubbly tops. Again very much a product of their time, when diesel electric trains became "streamlined" and car sprouted fins and wings and styling that draw heavily on the revolution already happening in the air. And indeed their predictions about speed of travel came true so that nowadays most family cars could outstrip the racing cars that Stirling Moss drove at Le Mans. Yes, it is a fairly safe bet that we'll be going faster in twenty years' time.

There are plenty of other examples of how the doctored of futurology can be rationalised simply by reference to the time of its creation. Mass unemployment gave us our obsession with the problems of managing the "leisure revolution" which never quite seems (have you noticed?) to arrive. The sexual obsession of the 1970s were easily transmuted into Woody Allen's orgasmation that was such a boon to the character in his film who wakes up after two centuries of cryogenic preservation. (She: "You haven't had sex in 200 years?" He: "304 if you count my marriage"). The Victorians were into exploring new continents so Jules Verne wrote about exploring the centre of the earth. Modern worries about environmental degradation and the collapse of law and order gave us *Mad Max*, *Bladerunner* and *Robocop*.

Is futurology bunk? It is certainly persistent bunk. It is not only actuaries who have had always had a fascination for the future. This quasi-science has longer history than our little survey might suggest. From the Old Testament prophets, through the Oracle of Delphi and Nostradamus to the novelists and film-makers of the last hundred years we have demonstrated a vigorous appetite for it. But futurology is also, as we hope we have shown, great fun. It only gets dangerous if, like weathermen or politicians, we take it too seriously. We should accept that it tells us more about our present than our future or our children's.

Our messed-up world

THOSE WHO enjoy the cut and thrust of politics but care little about what sort of world we're creating will revel in the discomfiture of Messrs Blair and Cunningham over radioactive waste and beef on the bone. However, they were only trying to tidy up a mess that should never have been created in the first place.

The real concern is that there is no reason to believe that such messes, and worse, will not be repeated in the future.

When you go against nature and common sense, propagating toxic substances that neither man nor nature can process safely, what else can you expect? Whether BSE was caused by making cows eat dead sheep or by marinating them in organophosphates, it doesn't take an advisory panel to figure out that the result won't be too nutritious. When you create enough radioactivity to kill millions of people, don't be surprised if you succeed. Even now genetic engineers are unleashing all sorts of grotesque perversions onto us.

The common theme is that greedy commerce and mercenary, microscope-minded boffins are being allowed to operate as if the consequences of their actions took place in some dimension which did not poison the rest of us.

To paraphrase Einstein, "A clever man gets out of situations a wise man would have avoided in the first place." I don't mind if Tony and Jack are too clever. I just hope that in the long term they'll prove to be wise.

JOHN PATTERSON

London SW5

YOUR REPORTS on nuclear waste (22, 23 April) raise several important questions. However, the main problem appears to be that the nuclear countries still have not solved their waste disposal problems. There are no solutions yet for the disposal of spent fuel and old power plants.

This may well be a reflection of the dramatic decrease in spending on nuclear research and development by governments since the early 1980s. It has to be asked whether the more than £5bn that governments spent on nuclear R&D in 1996 are either not enough or whether the funds have been channelled in the wrong direction. Are scientists conducting the wrong kind of research?

Dr KIRSTEN BINDEMANN

Research Fellow

Oxford Institute for Energy Studies

THE disastrous emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria is partly due to the routine administration of antibiotics to farm animals ("March of the superbugs", 24 April). Since this is money-driven, it will never stop unless governments world-wide cooperate to bring it about by legislation. Furthermore and most ominously, the antibiotics are present in the milk as well as the meat; apart from becoming vegans, therefore, the only way for humans to avoid harbouring resistant bacteria (to say nothing of developing ever more frequent virus diseases, many of them untreatable) is to buy organic milk and meat.

Organic farmers do manage to survive in this very competitive world of agriculture without feeding their stock on daily doses of antibiotics but their produce costs us more, of course. If we are all to stop swallowing daily doses of antibiotics the Government must provide financial support for these dedicated farmers. Others would then join them and their untainted products would be cheaper.

Dr H C GRANT

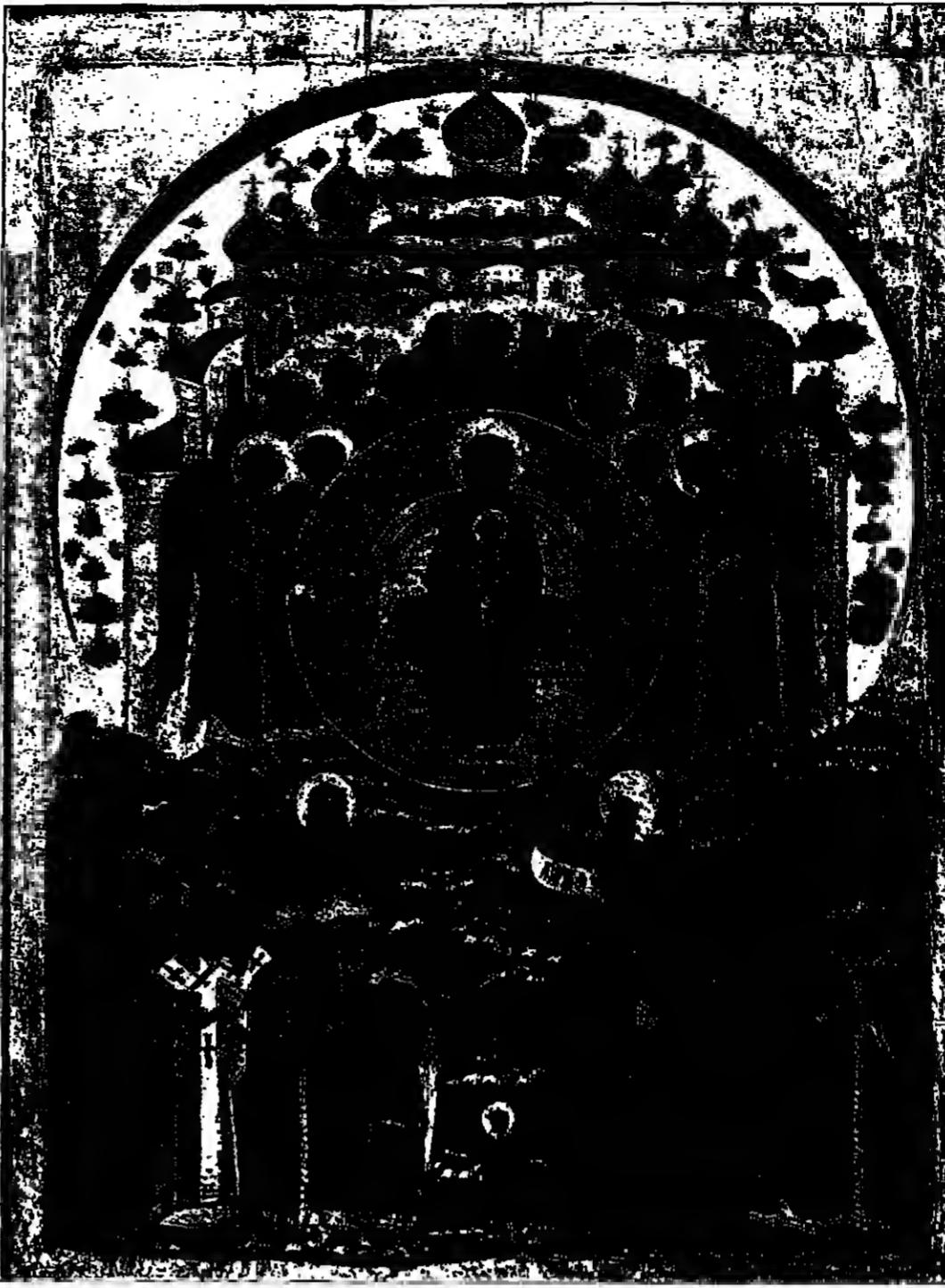
London NW3

It's only a game

JOHN O'BRYNE (letter, 21 April) questions whether he should "exercise his parental responsibilities" and ban his son from playing violent computer games.

As a young man I, and many of my friends, have enjoyed playing computer games for many years and remain relatively free of homicidal or antisocial urges. I suspect that Mr O'Bryne's son has many friends who also own computers and any ban could quite easily be circumvented.

I would strongly recommend that



'In You All Creation Exults', an icon of the Virgin and Child from Moscow in the current Royal Academy exhibition — see letters on the right

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

both parents display greater trust in their son. They should demonstrate a belief that their son is a rational being, able to differentiate computer game "action" from life.

NICK FULLER

London SE16

LISA DONOVAN (letter, 17 April) points out that children have been playing games involving swords, guns and other weapons for ever. However, these are about imagining resistant bacteria (to say nothing of developing ever more frequent virus diseases, many of them untreatable) is to buy organic milk and meat.

The threat from computer games is that the game is based on the imagination of much older people. This means children are absorbing a more sophisticated level of violence while at the same time suppressing development of their own initiative and creativity.

SILVIA GAUNT

Twickenham, Middlesex

Interview with OJ

YOUR REPORT "BBC defends £10,000 payment to OJ Simpson, but pulls interview after protests" (20 April) is a drift from the facts.

You state that *Ruby Wax Meets OJ* was pulled off air after a week of "negative publicity". The decision to reschedule the programme from its regular slot on Sunday at 10pm to Wednesday 29 April at 10.05pm was made over two weeks ago because a new drama serial beginning on Sunday night would have meant the OJ Simpson interview starting much later than the established time slot for *Ruby Wax's* series.

The Rev Graham Stevens, of the National Viewers and Listeners Association, who is quoted in your piece, has not seen the programme. His assumption that the BBC is going to "make fun of these deaths" is completely unfounded, as is his questioning of the use of "a comedian" to interview Simpson. Al-

though Miss Wax is a talented comedy performer, she is also an experienced and probing interviewer.

PAUL JACKSON

Controller of BBC Entertainment

BBC Production

London W12

MPs welcome here

CONTRARY to your views about Labour's "voter conflict" (leading article, 22 April), I welcome the opportunity to encounter my Labour MP in the flesh. I complained to our Labour MP's representative last year that the only time they bothered to visit us was when gaveling for votes two desperate weeks before an election.

MPs should consider these visits primarily as local opinion and data gathering missions, and secondly as marketing opportunities; listening, not preaching. It's extraordinary that any MP could object to the idea.

MADELEINE NEAVE

London SW15

Icons of a life of prayer

TOM LUBBOCK's review of the Art of Holy Russia exhibition (21 May, see picture left) offers some interesting comparisons between the theologies and church arts of East and West.

Mr Lubbock describes the impact of icons as arising in part from "the intellectual life of theology". Orthodox theologians would be less happy with the term "intellectual" than most of their Western counterparts. For the Orthodox theology arises principally – even solely – from the life of prayer rather than from intellectual debate.

Mr Lubbock's assertion that the icon depicting the Harrowing of Hell displays a better theology than the Western tradition begs more questions than he is able to address in a brief comment on one icon among many. To suggest that the Western tradition (with, for example, the amazing fresco of the descent to the dead by Fra Angelico in Florence's Museo di San Marco) is inferior, because it portrays Christ in close contact with hell rather than remote from it, is naive.

Part of the response of German theology to the Holocaust arises from the premise that God cannot keep at a safe distance from the fight with what is evil. Like us, maybe God has to get dirty if the world is to be saved. It may be that this is bad theology. But those who propound it do so from a belief that a theology which talks about God as separated from and uninvolved in the world is less helpful both to the intellect and to the life of prayer than a theology of engagement.

The Rev Dr PAUL SHEPPY

Barnoldswick, Lancashire

TOM LUBBOCK poses the question: what makes Andrei Rublev so good? To answer such a question we must first be inside the mind of the icon painter at the beginning of the 15th century during a revival of esoteric Hellenistic ideas heavily influenced by a long tradition from Pythagoras to the Philosopher.

This is a mind which makes a clear distinction between the illusion of the physical world and the true spiritual world. To concentrate on seeing this inner world the artist must first achieve silence in the Hesychastic tradition. This is a similar inner silence to that which has to be achieved by Buddhist monks.

Once this is achieved the painter is gnostic and what he paints is not a mere imaginary image but something he has seen. No wonder then to the Western European mind icons seem limited in their expression of movement!

Whilst early Russian icons do indeed come "from life", they come from a different perception of the nature of life than early Florentine art and use different symbolic means to express themselves, such as the Platonic cave and feet raised from the ground. If there is a fault with the current Royal Academy exhibition, it is that it avoids delving into this esoteric symbolism.

SIMON JOHN KYTE

London SE4

Bristol repented

YOUR article on the television series *A Respectable Trade* (18 April) presents the view that Bristol had difficulty in accepting its role in the slave trade. I was born and raised in Bristol and was taught, in considerable detail, at primary school about Bristol's part in the slave trade. And I was also taught that the anti-slavery movement gained rapid support in Bristol, especially among the Methodist and Quaker sections of the population.

STEVE MARRIOTT

Longworth, Oxfordshire

Bible backs lesbians

LESBIANS everywhere will want to thank Craig Anderson (letter, 23 April) for drawing their attention to the remarkable biblical injunction: "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman" (Leviticus 18:22). Unless, of course, we are to take it that God only speaks to men.

JOHN WATERMAN

Orpington, Kent

QUOTE UNQUOTE

"I have a one-to-one relationship with God. I am God's instrument. No one chooses this work. You have to be chosen by God" – Eileen Dwyer, the fifth healer asked to help England win the World Cup

"Why can't this century end right now? Why can't we call it quits? You know, push a button and agree to go on to the next century? I'm tired of this one" – Douglas Coupland, best-selling author of *Generation X*

"In place of the Thatcherite cold shower, it offers a warm bath" – David Marquand, professor of politics, and former Labour and SDP MP, on the first anniversary of the Blair government

"I was embarrassed recently when someone asked me how much my socks cost as I didn't know" – The Duke of Devonshire, the multi-millionaire

"Honey, it costs a lot of money to look this cheap" – Dolly Parton's words about her limestone-encrusted frock, required in reference to the Lord Chancellor's £600,000 refurbishment of his office

"With a legal touch like that, it is no wonder that you gave up the Bar for politics, unlike the Minister for Agriculture, Jack Cunningham, who sometimes gives up politics for the bar" – William Hague, in exchanges with Tony Blair about the beef-on-the-bone ban

LETTER from THE EDITOR

WHENEVER there seems to be a rather thin news list, we have a tradition at *The Independent* of making some news ourselves. I don't mean making it up, just getting ourselves taken over, or hurling an editor or two out of the tower to keep the chattering classes happy. We could put in on the masthead: "The newspaper that makes the news". So it's been Marr out, Rosie Boycott in, Mirror Group out, Marr in... And now it's happened again – dull week on the media front, what to do?

I would strongly recommend that

None of that. We certainly have disagreed not only about drugs but also about how forthcoming the daily newspaper should be in expressing its views on the subject. But that wasn't really the issue: I don't respect journalists who can't argue or stand up for themselves and I'd hate to work on a newspaper where disagreements didn't happen. On most things we agreed and we got on perfectly well. Rosie wasn't driven out. She decided that she wanted to work on a mid-market tabloid and that's a perfectly reasonable ambition.

So what now? By far the most important thing is that for the first time in the paper's history we are secure, and stable, working inside a big, liberal-minded company – one which not only makes profits but believes in independent journalism. For most of my time at *The Independent*, which spans eight years out of eleven, we have been living with stories about our possible demise, takeover or what have you. Now that's all gone and, like most of my colleagues, I haven't really got used to it yet – it is like the sudden disappearance of a kind of daily pain one had almost become used to. Readers will see a series of changes in the months ahead which will show quite clearly an intelligent paper moving upwards and expanding too.

<p

I'm told the Tories are in need of a little help. Allow me ...



DAVID AARONOVITCH
RENAMES THE
CONSERVATIVE PARTY

HAVING received no support whatsoever in my campaign to become the Labour nominee for Mayor of London (see last week's article), I am switching my attention to the Conservatives. Mr Blair's party can - for the time being at least - afford to ignore the talent that exists on the fringe of conventional politics. The Tories, by contrast, cannot.

Besides, Mr William Hague and I share some valuable common insights. He practices transcendental meditation and I am a Zoroastrian; he was president of the Oxford Union, and I served as president of the National Union of Students; he spoke at the Conservative Party conference when he was 16, and I was an active member of the School Council. Most important, both of us have failed to make quite the impact on the national political scene that our contemporaries predicted for us.

To do us justice, these relative failures are not really our faults. William had no alternative but to accept the job of Welsh secretary when it was offered to him by John Major, and it has been hard for me to live down the ridiculous "Aaronovitch in bed with quins" (two of them men) headlines from 1989. But our destinies are now in our own hands, and - if we work together - I am sure that we can both triumph.

As a token of my good faith - and by way of an example of what Mr Hague might expect, were he to endorse my candidacy - I would like to offer him some thoughts on what might be done to make his party once more the mighty force that once it was in British politics. Let us deal with this in three broad sections: the scale of the problem; reshuffling; rebranding. The first area is uncontroversial and may be summarised thus: everyone hates the Conservatives. Conservatives hate the Conservatives. Newborn infants hate the Conservatives. At the merest hint of a Tory canvasser,

whole neighbourhoods of dogs begin to bark and garden snails crawl back into their shells. Tories are seen as corrupt, boring, outdated and sexually predatory (it was mainly in reaction to this last perception that Mr Hague was elected leader last summer).

It must be obvious from the above that a reshuffle will not, of itself, solve the problem. Consider the following names: Michael Howard, Sir Brian Mawhinney, Stephen Dorrell, John Maples, Nigel Evans, Michael Jack, James Arbuthnot - and, of course - Cecil Parkinson and Sir Norman Fowler. Shut your eyes and repeat it aloud to yourself now - Sir Norman Fowler. The very name defies rebranding (unless you were planning to start up a Thin and Evasive Party). So, though it hints to say it, Mr Hague must sack every single one of his shadow cabinet and start again. Young Turks like David Willetts, John Whittingdale and Kermal Dengiz should be given the top jobs at once.

That, however, is the easy bit. It has been mooted this week that Mr Hague (though, naturally, he denies it) is now considering the far more radical option of changing the party's name. Naturally, many of the more nostalgic Conservatives will find this a difficult notion to swallow. But swallow it they must. Otherwise the Tories will go into the next election as the only major party that has not changed its name in the last decade. The Liberals became the Liberal Democrats, making it clear that they would only be as liberal as voters wanted them to be, and Labour, famously, metamorphosed from socialist to "Third Way" (a Buddhist notion, I believe) under the purple banner of "New Labour".

Now it's the Tories' turn. But what should they choose? There are a number of off-the-shelf options that they might like to try, but none of them seem quite right to me. "Progressive" sounds like a building society; "People's" has been comrade-deered and probably copyrighted - by Mr Blair. "Unionist" is hard to explain, and will remind voters of Northern Ireland; "Radical" is a bit frightening and minority - like monkey's brains or anal sex; "Monarchist" is risky while Charles is still heir to the throne; "Taxpayers" leaves out housewives.

My inclination, therefore, is to go for something entirely novel. Which leaves us free to ask the fundamental question, what do the British people really want? We know that, as a nation, we are suspended between the old and the new, between a love of our history and our institutions on the one hand, and a desire not to completely leave behind by the rest of the world on the other. Mr Blair's genius was to come up with the formulation for New Labour, "traditional values in a modern setting".

But there is an ace that beats Mr Blair's king. It is evident in the stones of our ancient monuments, in the way the spires of our great cathedrals touch the sky, in the queues outside Madame Tussauds. It is manifested in the membership of the National Trust of English Heritage. It is incarnated in the sales figures of the *Post Times* catalogue.

Let me unveil then, the New Heritage Party, with the far more potent slogan, "modern values in a traditional setting." The symbol is the go-ahead businesswoman answering her mobile phone under the dome of St Paul's. It is William Hague standing on the battlements of Windsor Castle, sending a fax to Taiwan. It is "Rule Britannia" recorded by Prodigy. It is King William V. It is the future.

None of this is any fun for the laboratory workers. If they

Sometimes it is right to sacrifice animals for our own well-being



TREVOR
PHILIPS
ON ANIMAL
EXPERIMENTS

IS THE FACT that my octogenarian mother might have the pleasure of seeing her second great-grandchild with her own eyes more important than the pain and distress caused by the experiments on animals that could lead to a treatment that would save her sight? The cost isn't just financial: it involves the cruelty done to millions of albino rabbits who have irritants deliberately dropped into their eyes as part of the research that may allow the elderly to keep seeing just a little longer.

Today is World Lab Animal Day, and I want you to stand in front of the mirror and say to yourself that the question doesn't matter. You'd like to, wouldn't you? After all it's really up to boffins to tell us the best thing to do here. As with many other key decisions of our time, BSE for example, we wave our hands despairingly at the men in white coats, and declare that it's all too difficult to go for ordinary mortals to handle.

Well, it isn't. It's very simple really. You have to decide what matters most. I will admit that it would not distress me for a second if I never saw another snake, rat or mouse in my life. I dislike them and they me. But even if you discount them, there are all sorts of animals used in scientific experimentation, and many of them are of the cuddly variety - monkeys, dogs, cats, and of course sheep, such as Dolly, who famously was created in a laboratory.

There are 2.7 million animals used in laboratory work every year in the UK. In the US, more than five million animals die each year as a result of so-called "lethal dose" tests. Their deaths are not accidental. The lethal dose procedure was devised to determine what amount of a substance would kill a given percentage of a sample of animals. Thus the test which has been used for most of this century, the LD50, or lethal dose 50, simply continues feeding poison to animals until 50 per cent die. And, sadly, the animals do not simply lie down and pass quietly away. They die painfully and distressingly.

None of this is any fun for the laboratory workers. If they



The world's most famous laboratory animal, Dolly, poses with her little lamb

Photograph: AP

didn't have to do it, they wouldn't. Dozens of companies now contribute money to charities dedicated to finding alternatives to testing on animals. This is partly because they believe in the cause; but it is probably also due to the fact that increasingly, consumers are asking awkward questions about the products they are buying, and there is nothing more likely to turn off a British

mand for laboratory animals. No way. There is no sign in a slackening of the demand for, say, specially bred white mice. In fact, the people who breed these things say that not only do they need supply more, but they are having to provide specialist varieties for new and exotic uses, such as genetic engineering and testing ground breaking surgical techniques.

We could continue to he-

Scientists are at the heart of the controversy but which of us, told that our son or daughter has been diagnosed with cancer, would say "save the bunny rabbit, sod the child"?

consumer than any hint of cruelty to animals.

The buyers of cosmetics are well aware of the history of animal testing in this field: sooner rather than later we can expect to see a more complete labelling of proprietary drugs, and I should not be surprised if one day all household products will be required to carry a disclaimer stating that they have not been tested on animals.

Thus the test which has been used for most of this century, the LD50, or lethal dose 50, simply continues feeding poison to animals until 50 per cent die. And, sadly, the animals do not simply lie down and pass quietly away. They die painfully and distressingly.

None of this is any fun for the laboratory workers. If they

which, if not hidden, can end up blighting their lives. Would we deny someone with vitiligo - the condition said to afflict the singer Michael Jackson - the chance to use safe makeup rather than he hidden away at home because of the embarrassment of having blotchy skin?

There is little doubt that huge advances are being made in finding alternatives to animal testing. New techniques allow for testing on dead animals, or tissue cultures: there are advances in the use of corneas from eye banks, and the ubiquitous computer model is now offering scientists a reliable tool for testing innovative products without using animals. So, in theory, there should be a steady reduction in the de-

mand for laboratory animals. and me, that's who. Most of us want to be reassured about the safety of the soap that our children use. If we aren't we won't buy it. On the other hand, not enough of us will pay the extra margin that would make other ways of testing economic.

Scientists who are working in medical research are at the centre of the controversy. Ironically, it is the men and women who turn down lucrative approaches from drug companies on the grounds that they do not want their research compromised who often become the objects of attack by the wilder fringes of the animal welfare movement. Their argument is that if they could find easier, quicker ways of saving human beings from the effects of disease, ageing or contagion, they would do so. But which of us, told that our son or daughter has been diagnosed with cancer, would say "save the bunny rabbit, sod the child"?

World Lab Animal Day should be an opportunity for us to insist that animals are treated as humanely as possible, that we try hard to find alternatives to their use in experiments and that we do as little testing as necessary. But let this be one more nail in the coffin of public hypocrisy. We love animals; but we love ourselves more, and we should admit it.

Why New Labour is in search of an ideology



BOYD
TONKIN
THE MARXISTS
OF YESTERYEAR

EARLY in 1969, the young president of the Government Association at Wellesley College in New England addressed her fellow students with a rousing call to militancy. "For too long, those who have led us have viewed politics as the art of the possible," she thundered. Now, it was time to ask for more, much more: "As the French students wrote on the walls of the Sorbonne: 'Be realistic! Demand the impossible! We can't settle for less'."

Stirring stuff. But did Hillary Rodham (not yet Clinton's) settle for less on the route to her role as America's First Lady? As we approach the 30th anniversary of those mythical "events" of May 1968, the usual judgment

on the fire-raisers of that briefly explosive time runs like this. Their rhetoric crashed headlong into the solid walls of social control in parliaments and bureaucracies - barriers much harder to pass than mere riot-shields. But, since the young rebels were bursting with energy and ambition, they discarded their demims, donned ties or two-suits, and found a respectable entry through the front door instead.

Pragmatism supplanted ideology. The long march through the institutions began in earnest. Ms Rodham grew up into the cautiously reforming power behind the White House throne. Brazil's revolutionary Marxist thinker, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, matured into a neo-liberal, market-minded president much appreciated by the World Bank. As for that dangerous subversive who edited a book called *Red Scandal* in 1973: well, the current Chancellor's fiscal rectitude makes Ken Clarke look like Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

So goes the orthodox assessment. Yet it tells only half the truth. As the post-1968 generation swam into the mainstream, the ghosts of their ideological past floated quietly into the state machine. This is not to claim that the centrist, faintly social-democratic regimes who now hold the reins in London, Washington or

Rome are secret radicals hiding their dynamite under a smart suit and a soundbite. What you see, with Blair or Bill, is really what you get. No: the real legacy of '68 lies in a hunger for the "project", the mission, the philosophical system that opens an umbrella of coherence over the zigzag turns of normal politics.

Hence the "Third Way" recently sketched by Robin Cook and Jack Straw. It arrives as the latest in a series of bids to brand New Labour as the Conservative Philosophy

The real legacy of '68 lies in a hunger for the 'project', hence the Third Way

of New Theory as well. Will Hutton's stakeholding and Amritsar Etzioni's communitarianism evidently failed to make the grade. Yet the longing for a Big Picture is eradicably persistent.

When the prime minister visited Washington for his recent House lobbied, he took along one adviser who perfectly embodies this continuity between seminar-room and statecraft. From the 1960s onwards, Anthony Giddens fed the leadership's taste. Attitudes to non-party thinkers were even more dismissive. In the 1960s, Harold Wilson never talked to

the New Left cohort of rising intellectual stars, such as Stuart Hall and E P Thompson. His idea of a distinguished mind was Arnold Goodman.

Elsewhere, Blair has used his powers of patronage to install the great Bengal-born economist-turned-ethical theorist Amartya Sen as Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. Here is an administration that truly cares about its intellectual bona fides. In comparison, Margaret Thatcher's sporadic visits to the Conservative Philosophy

models of change. Now the director of the London School of Economics, he seems to be edging towards an unofficial post as Court Philosopher.

From some angles, Labour's new-found interest in high theory looks strange. Notoriously, the party never had much time for its own philosophers. For a start, the pointy-headed tendency lean (as in Harold Laski's case) much too far left for the leadership's taste. Attitudes to non-party thinkers were even more dismissive. In the 1960s, Harold Wilson never talked to

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Gregor von Rezzori

THE NOVELIST and memoirist Gregor von Rezzori was one of the last and most redoubtable links with a Mid-to-Eastern European world, rich in history and character, complex in nationality and ethnic allegiance, that has gone forever, devoured or dispersed through successive waves of rapacious competitive nationalism.

This territorial insecurity destabilised and finally obliterated the boundaries of the Bukovina, where von Rezzori was born in 1914 and in which he spent his childhood and youth. So searching and lovingly re-created in the early sections of his autobiography *The Snows of Yesteryear* (1990).

Individual sections of this book invoke the character of his father, mother, sister, nurse and governess and von Rezzori simultaneously brings to life their shared environment in the Bukovina, a troubled Arcadia in the Carpathian forests and the Tatra mountains: once the kingdom of Galicia, then one of the autonomous crownlands of the Austro-Hungarian realm until its penultimate allotment, in 1918, to the kingdom of Romania.

In 1940, after a treaty between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, the Bukovina was divided into two, with the southern half, including Moldavia, ceded to Romania and the northern region, which included Czernowitz, the author's birthplace and the capital of the old kingdom, awarded to the Soviet republic of Ukraine. It is hard for the English, relatively secure in their island, to envisage the shifting sands of unstable context for childhood and youth.

Von Rezzori's major claim to fame was registered internationally with the earlier publication of his great novel *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite* (1981) which first and quite famously appeared in 1969 as an isolated story, a self-contained



Von Rezzori: mordant and very modern irony

Photograph: Jerry Bauer

chapter from the book itself, in the *New Yorker*. Although the provocative title of the book caused preliminary ripples of unease in the United States, glowing reviews throughout the New York press quickly established not only the liberal and deeply civilised credentials of the new writer but also the depth and originality of his gift.

Memoirs of an Anti-Semite

is an original, continually surprising, beautifully paced and modulated work of fiction, a small masterpiece with bracing undertones of that detached and astringent, cheerfully mordant and very modern irony that we find in such disparate writers as Musil, Schnitzler, Pirandello and Ito Svevo. Some aspects of the narrative are obliquely autobiographical; the novel as a whole takes on deeper resonance after a reading of *The Snows of Yesteryear*.

With French and Italian

translations following the British and American publication of this book, von Rezzori appeared as a new and somewhat exotic writer in New York, Paris and London in the early 1980s but in fact two earlier books had been published in Germany in the early Fifties, already securing a sizeable reputation: *Tales from Maghrebina* (1953) and *Oedipus Triumphs at Stalingrad* (1954). Another novel, *Ein Hornbläser in Tschernopol*, appeared in the United States under the title *The Hussar* and won the Theodor Fontane prize. *Tales from Maghrebina*, a sequence of fantasies and sardonic cautionary tales, was illustrated with line drawings by the author.

Von Rezzori's recurring

themes in his novels all reflect

within unstable contexts the

ebb and flow, rise and fall of

personal relationships which

seek to balance or to reconcile

the creative artist's sense of

commitment and responsibility

with the irresponsibilities and

betrayals that so often

seem inseparable from the

artist's life. These unstable contexts, from pre-war Bucharest to Vienna, reflect the author's childhood and youthful experience set out in such detail in *The Snows of Yesteryear*.

The family home on the

outskirts of Czernowitz was on

the verge of wild, deep forests.

A journey of 50 miles could

take three days by horse and

carriage. Von Rezzori's father

was an eccentric aristocrat, a

passionate huntsman and an ar-

chitectural historian, whose oc-

culation, reassigned from the

former Austrian civil service, was to look after the estates belonging to the Orthodox Church with the special task of overseeing the monasteries of the Bukovina. These buildings were usually set in remote mountainous country, visited by father and son on horseback across the Carpathian mountains. His loving but neurotic mother, obsessed with hygiene, propriety and child-rearing methods, was estranged from her spirited, extrovert husband and passed the winters in Egypt.

The von Rezzori family lived a privileged life of possessions, houses, travels abroad, servants, dogs and horses. Gregor grew up in a melting pot of ethnic groups, languages, creeds, temperaments and customs, as he has described it. If the *lingua franca* for so many Russians, Ukrainians, Romanians, Poles and Austrians was German – with the von Rezzoris still looking to the nearest metropolis, Vienna, as their cultural capital – it was also essential to employ different languages for family, schoolfriends, servants

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Family life here becomes a kind of hulocomic tragicomedy but there is nothing Chekhovian in von Rezzori's creation of time and place. Hitler's rise is constantly in the background, and

the cultivated almost like a collector, with the occasional, carefully planted, esoteric word that matched. John Updike's love for the look and the sound of rare words. In this book there are also loving descriptions of autumn mornings, dead leaves, woodsmoke and hirdsong, and the torpor of summer evenings disturbed only by the sounds of the forest and by light filtering through vine leaves.

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Sears down at heel following an unhappy week

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

SEARS, the struggling retailer, had an uncertain session as worries multiplied about next week's results.

The shares, in busy trading, fell 3p to 58.25p. Figures are due on Tuesday and the stock market's best expectation is a down-at-heel profit of £45m compared with £83.1m.

Exceptional charges, largely stemming from the group's retreat from the shoe industry, will weigh heavily on the figures. They could be around £170m.

Julie Ramshaw at investment house Morgan Stanley is adopting a cautious stance. Still, the retail group should be able to ease the pain with details of its demerger of the Selfridges department store and then the Freemans mail-order side.

The rest of the market ended a downbeat week on a decidedly unhappy note. Footsie fell 34.2 points to 5,863.9. At one time it was off 112.7, with profit-taking among fi-

nancials largely responsible. Supporting shares, however, were in better form with the small cap index actually managing modest progress.

One again exporters made much of the running as disenchantment engulfed the once high-flying financials.

Great Universal Stores' dramatic success in the fierce struggle for Argos, the catalogue stores chain, lifted its shares 42p to 856p, a peak. Argos, which had seemed capable of avoiding the unwanted GUS embrace, jumped 37p to 645p, against the 650p bid price.

Rolls-Royce and GKN underlined the return of the exporters to favour as sterling has lost some of its exuberance. The aero engine group climbed 16p to 291.5p and GKN, helped by its European tank alliance, added 57p to 1,727p.

Financials torrid time was emphasised by a 32.5p fall to 937p by **Lloyds TSB**. It was

hurt by talk of a mortgage war which also depressed the former building societies with Woolwich down 8.5p to 335p. Insurances were again anxious with **Commercial Union**, unsettled by its cautious statement earlier in the week, off 50p to 1,070p. Other insurers feeling the pinch included **Norwich Union**, down 13p to 449.5p, and CU's intended partner, **General Accident** off 40p to 1,387p.

British Biotech, the struggling drugs group, looked like being confined to the casualty ward before a late rally left the shares unchanged at 50p. Credit Lyonnaise research suggesting the shares were up to five times overvalued did the early damage.

Carlton Communications improved 17p to 478p following a presentation at Dresden Kleinwort Benson. Dingoe's decision to sell some fringe drink brands went down well with the shares up 31.5p to 721p. And **Pearson**, which

climbed the sale of its consumer magazines, hardened 9p to 955p.

Cadbury Schweppes, riding at a 904p peak only weeks ago, fell 22p to 823p. Worries persist about sales at its US soft drinks operation. But it was the sale by chief executive John Sunderland of 10,000 shares at 780p earlier this month which did the latest damage.

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Booker, the cash and carry chain, lost 10.5p to 260.5p as worries resurfaced about its tight profit margins and the difficulty it is seemingly encountering integrating its **Nordin** & **Peacock** acquisition.

British Dredging, one of the market's oldest takeover chestnuts, seems finally to have fallen. The shares edged forward 7p to 181.5p as **Grafton**, an Irish group, mounted an agreed £35.5m offer. The Irish builders merchant has expanded its British operations substantially in the past three years. The deal will lift its chain of British outlets to approaching 70. It acquired 29.87 per cent of Dredging last year at 145p a share against the 193p it is offering for the rest.

Hard-pressed Waverley Mining edged forward 2.5p to 21.5p after reporting bid talks were still taking place. La Senza, a lingerie chain, crumpled 10p to 12.5p when it said its bid negotiations were con-

tinuing but any price was likely to be near to 10p.

Vero, the electronic equipment group, improved a further 17.5p to 170p on the prospect of a United States battle for control.

British International, a fibre optics group, fell 13.5p to 101.5p after reporting it had terminated bid talks.

Tring International held at 10.5p. The home entertainment group has secured new banking facilities and is raising between £300,000 and £1.1m through an offer at 6.5p a share.

Petra Diamonds, up 8p at 145.5p, sparked on rumours of a significant find in Angola. And **Premier Oil** gushed 2.75p to 43.75p reflecting talk of a Singapore gas deal.

Wickes, the builders merchant cum do-it-yourself group, rose 4p to 354.5p as it met analysis and electrical group **Bowthorpe** was 8.5p firmer to 10p ahead of analytical interest.

TAKING STOCK

WASSALL, the conglomerate which has reinvented itself as a venture capitalist, continues to take a shine to **TLG**, the old **Thor**.

Lighting, it has lifted its stake to 7.12 per cent. **TLG** rose 5p to 106.5p after

111.5p in risk trading. **Wassall** is not expected to bid it is, the market believes, attempting to put pressure on the **TLG** management to do a deal.

STG, a fledgling property group traded on **Ofex**, rose 2p to 74.5p. It has high hopes of an Ulster peace dividend by developing a Grade II listed building at Londonderry.

STG plans a department store with a restaurant and other retail outlets. The company was created by Stefan Allesch-Taylor, who has 29.9 per cent.

FOOD group John Lusty, on the verge of a big acquisition, lifted profits 157 per cent to £1.9m in the year to end March. The shares are 11.25p.

Source: Bloomberg. Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The pre-emption (PE) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items but including exceptional items. Other details: E, rights; A, dividend; S, suspended; P, Party; Pd, np; Pd, AIM; Gdr, Gdr; B, B shares; G, G shares. Source: Bloomberg

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Share Price Data

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GUS wins £1.9bn battle for Argos

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

GREAT Universal Stores clinched a dramatic victory in its £1.9bn hostile bid for Argos yesterday after the catalogue retailer's largest shareholder decided to accept the 650p per share cash offer.

Schroders Investment Management left its decision to the last minute but swung the vote when it decided to pledge its 15 per cent stake to GUS. "It was quite close but we thought it was in the best interests of our clients," said Schroders director Jim Cox, who added: "I've had my 15 minutes of fame, if that's what it was. I can disappear now."

Schroders' move ensured success for GUS which secured acceptance from 58 per cent of Argos' shares. Both sides had been in tenebrous yesterday morning saving the bid was too close to call. However, analysts said the lure of cash and the dip in the stock market in the past few days had made the offer difficult to turn down. A GUS spokesman said an overwhelming majority of Argos' largest 40 shareholders had accepted the offer.

One of the shareholders who backed Argos said: "Cash at a premium is clearly attractive and the record shows that these kind of bids are usually successful. But we would have liked

to have seen how the company would have done if it had remained independent."

Ashley Thomas at SG Securities said: "I think GUS will be able to do a lot with the business but all credit to Argos and the defence team. When the bid started it looked like a knock-out blow."

Lord Wolfson, GUS's chairman, said he was delighted with his side's victory but was struggling to speak due to a sore throat caused by his efforts to persuade shareholders to back his bid. "I look forward to welcoming Argos' employees to GUS and to building on Argos's strengths which together with our home shopping business will create a formidable British based retail business."

Sir Richard Lloyd, Argos chairman, said he was "disappointed" with the outcome but said the company had received a fair hearing from shareholders. GUS shares rose 42p to 856p as the City warmed to the bid's success. Argos shares closed up 608p at 645p.

Sir Richard Lloyd, Argos' chief executive who was only recruited after the bid had been launched due to illness of Mike Smith, met Lord Wolfson yesterday afternoon to discuss the hand-over of the business and communications with staff.

Mr Rose will receive £540,000 for less than three months work. Mr Smith is in line

for a pay-off of more than £1m. This includes £640,000 under the terms of his two year contract, and shares worth almost £500,000.

Bob Stewart, the finance director who was due to retire, will receive £200,000 plus £80,000 for his shares. Peter Fishbourne and Trevor Green will receive more than £500,000 each.

GUS will now concentrate on

integrating the Argos business with its own retail operations which include the Marshall Ward catalogue and the White Arrow delivery network. Major cost-cutting is not expected as the major benefit of the deal for GUS is adding its home shopping and delivery systems to the Argos stores. GUS will introduce some of its own lines, particularly clothing, to the Argos catalogue. Argos products which are focused on hard goods such as toys, electricals and jewellery, will be featured in GUS's catalogues.

GUS is expected to keep the Argos management below board level as it feels they have done a good job.

The bid battle ended up much closer than expected. When GUS pounced in February Argos appeared in disarray. Its shares had been savaged by three profits warning in a year. Within days of the bid it was forced to disclose that Mr Smith was too ill to fulfil his duties and later that Mr Stewart was set to retire.



Victory: Lord Wolfson (left) plans a 'formidable British retail business'. Stuart Rose (right) has the consolation of £540,000 for less than three months work.

Catalogue of a home shopping struggle

1 FEBRUARY: Lord Wolfson meets Sir Richard Lloyd at Schroders, advisers to Argos, regarding a possible agreed deal.

Sir Richard says the offer is too low and rejects it.

3 FEBRUARY: GUS launches hostile bid at 570p, valuing Argos at £1.6bn. Argos rejects it as opportunistic and reveals Mike Smith, its chief executive, is too ill to carry out his full duties. After three profits warnings in a year, Argos looks vulnerable.

9 FEBRUARY: Argos appoints Stuart Rose, the former Burton director, as acting chief executive. With a signing on fee of £180,000 he stands to collect a total of £543,000 for two months' work if Argos loses.

17 FEBRUARY: GUS publishes its offer document saying Argos is a "mature business"

whose prospects "come nowhere near supporting a price today of 570p."

26 FEBRUARY: The nadir of Argos' defence. It emerges that Bob Stewart, finance director is

"Shopping at Argos is a bit like kissing your sister." — Stuart Rose on the lack of excitement in the group's stores.

"I like kissing my sister." — Sir Richard Lloyd:

to take early retirement though the announcement is buried in the small print of the defence document. With a 69 year old

chairman, a brand new chief executive and a finance director on the brink of retirement, Argos faces an uphill battle.

13 MARCH: GUS announces a £500m "agreed" deal to buy Metromail, an American database company. The deal develops into an auction with rival US bidder leaving GUS fighting on two fronts.

25 MARCH: Argos unveils new retailing strategy including a fashion joint venture with Littlewoods, plans to modernise the stores and catalogue and add one per cent to the margin over two years.

26 APRIL: A setback for

Lord Wolfson as Next, where he is chairman, announces a shock

profits warning.

1 APRIL: Bid receives OFT clearance.

3 APRIL: Argos' final defence published including a £150m return of funds to shareholders and bullish profit forecasts.

8 APRIL: GUS raises offer to

650p per share valuing Argos at

17 APRIL: GUS completes Metromail deal after lengthy battle.

18 APRIL: In a last ditch effort to get investors on its side, Argos gets Takeover Panel permission to release fresh upbeat figures on current trading. But the Sunday papers side with GUS.

22 APRIL: Argos has its biggest break in weeks. Prudential, with a 7 per cent stake, announces its support of the Argos management, saying the company has been a good long term performer and could outperform the market once more. Baillie Gifford, with 6.6 per cent follows. But Schroders Investment Management holds the key with a 15 per cent stake.

24 APRIL: GUS clinches victory after Schroders accepts the offer.

Fresh cheer over interest rates

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

THE was fresh cheer yesterday for businesses and home-buyers hoping that the cost of borrowing will climb no higher, with new figures showing that growth slowed in the first quarter of this year.

The increase in Gross Domestic Product, the widest measure of the economy, was 0.4 per cent. This was less than expected and the lowest in any quarter since mid-1995.

The year-on-year growth rate declined from 2.9 per cent to 2.8 per cent, closer to the sustainable trend.

"If you weren't convinced interest rates had peaked before these figures, you should be now," said David Hillier,

er of Barclays Capital. Some economists were less confident, but virtually none expects the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee to change rates from the current level of 7.25 per cent at its meeting next month.

The caution stemmed mainly from the fact that initial GDP estimates are usually revised. Growth in the final quarter of 1997, now put at 0.6 per cent, was also first put at a relatively weak 0.4 per cent.

The greatest risk of a rate rise has passed, but the evidence has not really been overwhelming," said Ken Wattret, an analyst at Paribas. It would not have shaken out all the hawks on the MPC, he predicted.

The available figures showed that manufacturing was broadly flat during

the quarter, while production – adding in energy extraction and the electricity, gas and water supply – had declined.

Service sector output climbed by a still-robust 0.8 per cent, down from 1.2 per cent the previous quarter. The Office for National Statistics indicated that growth in most components appeared to be slowing, although little detail is available before the next stab at estimating first quarter GDP due late next month.

Critics of the Government pounced on the signs of weaker growth, with Malcolm Bruce, the Liberal Democrat spokesman claiming that the economy outside the service sector was now in recession.

According to calculations by the House of Commons Library, yesterday's

figures implied that output in the other third of the economy – manufacturing, agriculture and construction – had fallen for two consecutive quarters.

Gordon Brown, speaking to the Scottish Business Forum in Glasgow, repeated his familiar message of the need to stick to tough policies for the sake of long-term stability. "We will not compromise our hard-won reputation for prudence in economic management by short-term gestures," he said.

The Chancellor also stressed the importance of investment and innovation, drawing attention to the Government's cuts in corporation tax to 30p and additional investment incentives. He hinted that more might follow. "We are prepared to look at further changes," he said.

Yesterday's figures were enough for currency strategists to start advising investors to sell sterling, with some predicting a 20-25 per cent fall. The recent weaker economic figures, along with reports that one of the MPC's hawks has changed his mind about the need for a rate rise, have shifted sentiment in the financial markets.

However, there was little reaction in the currency markets yesterday. The pound ended the day virtually unchanged, with the sterling index at 105.9 and the rate against the German mark at DM1.99.

There were further gains in short sterling futures, which now imply traders expect interest rates to be falling by the autumn. The FTSE-100 index fell 34 points to 5,863.9.

Scottish Power pulls out of talks over £3bn US deal

By Michael Harrison

SCOTTISH POWER yesterday pulled out of talks to spend more than £3bn on an American electricity company after news of the deal leaked in the US.

In a brief statement Scottish Power said it had terminated discussions about buying Florida Progress, an electricity generator and supplier with 1.3 million customers in Florida and sales of \$3bn a year.

Negotiations had been at an advanced stage and a team from Scottish Power had begun the process of due diligence, a spokesman said. He added that it was no longer interested in

acquiring Florida Progress and there was no question of talks being re-opened.

However, he said Scottish Power remained interested in buying a US utility as part of its expansion strategy and it was continuing to look for opportunities.

Scottish Power said it had withdrawn from the deal because the due diligence process established Florida Progress was not worth what it was proposing to pay.

The US business was valued at \$5bn. However, the leaking of the takeover talks had also prompted a sharp jump in the share price of Florida Progress

which would have meant Scottish Power having to pay more to gain control anyway.

Had the deal gone ahead it would have reversed the process which has seen more than half the electricity suppliers in the UK fall under the control of US utilities.

Scottish Power obtained a listing on the New York stock exchange last year, partly for the purpose of being able to issue shares to fund acquisitions.

The group has been one of the most aggressive multi-utilities in the UK, acquiring first Manweb and then Southern Water. It has also diversified into telecoms and gas.

Centrica board deflates critics with dividend hint

By Michael Harrison

CENTRICA, the demerged trading and supply arm of British Gas, hinted that it aimed to pay a dividend this year after coming under attack from shareholders yesterday for paying bonuses to executives when it was still making losses.

Shareholders attending Centrica's first annual meeting in London criticised the board over the £423,000 in bonuses paid to five executive directors last year despite the company making a £623m bottom line loss.

Centrica has complained that electricity companies have been allowed to attack its gas markets while it is prevented from entering their markets until competition begins this September.

Centrica chairman, Sir Michael Perry, replied that he "sincerely hoped this would be the last occasion when bonuses were paid without a bottom line profit being achieved".

Earlier, Sir Michael told the 900 shareholders at the meeting that it would be "disgraceful" if there was any further slippage in the timetable for introducing competition into the domestic electricity market.

Centrica has complained that electricity companies have been allowed to attack its gas markets while it is prevented from entering their markets until competition begins this September.

The company fears that by the time the electricity market is opened up the local suppliers will have tied up their customers with attractive "dual fuel" deals to supply both gas and electricity.

Figures released yesterday by the gas regulator, Ofgas, show that more than 1.5 million households have switched from British Gas while a further 2 million have signed contracts and are waiting to do so.

Competition was extended yesterday to a further 3.2 million households in Wales, the West Midlands and Wiltshire. The whole of the country will be open to competition by 23 May.

STOCK MARKETS

INTEREST RATES

CURRENCIES

OTHER INDICATORS

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

TOURIST RATES

STOCK MARKETS

INTEREST RATES

CURRENCIES

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

OTHER INDICATORS

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OUTLOOK ON WHY BRITISH PRODUCTIVITY IS SO MUCH LOWER THAN OUR COMPETITORS; DANGERS OF LEVERAGED BUYOUTS, AND LORD WOLFSON'S VICTORY OVER ARGOS

I DON'T want to sound like some kind of "up the workers" bar room bore, but there were some quite shocking figures cited by Gordon Brown this week on Britain's continued record of poor productivity, and it seems to me that the blame for this can really only lie in one quarter - British management. According to the Chancellor, our productivity per capita in manufacturing is 20-30 per cent lower than Germany and 40 per cent lower than the US.

We also compare extremely unfavorably with poor old socialist France, overburdened, as everyone here seems to see it, with the social chapter, statutory working hours, long holidays and generally inflexible labour practices. Notwithstanding the lure of the ski slopes, a wonderful climate, the beach, the best food and wine in the world, and, of course, an hour or two in between lunch, the French still manage to beat us.

The size of this gap is alarming enough, worse, it seems to be widening. It would appear that the Thatcher revolution of the 1980s and the past five years of relative economic stability have done little or nothing to improve the underlying competitiveness of British manufacturing industry. All this is bad indeed, but it becomes more worrying still.

If the productivity gap was confined just to manufacturing, it would be possible to

view it as just part of old Britain, nothing to do with scrappy New Britain and its thriving creative and service industries. Not true, according to the Chancellor's figures. Even in the service sector, we fail to lead the others in any major industry. The Chancellor admits to being puzzled and has asked Margaret Beckett to look into the causes so that barriers to higher productivity, whether they be regulatory, fiscal or cultural, are removed.

Well here's my penny's worth. Mr Brown is too charitable. Since it is no longer possible to blame the unions, working practices, or even - post our new-found belief in the virtues of an independently set monetary policy - Britain's propensity to boom and bust, there can only really be one explanation: nor is it anything to do with regulatory barriers or fiscal policy. Poor competition law, combined with a failure in Government to deal adequately with entrenched monopoly and cartel, may be closer the mark, but fundamentally low productivity is about a failure in management.

There are many shining examples of world class British companies that knock the pants off the international competition, but on the whole British industry has failed to invest, it's failed to innovate, it's failed to bring about necessary economies of scale, and perhaps most crucially of all,

it has failed to motivate and manage its people.

Meanwhile our manufacturing sector in particular has continued to give its workers above-average wage increases, while our bosses, citing the need to remain internationally competitive on pay, have remunerated themselves in many cases beyond the dreams of avarice. And still they continue to whinge on about the high pound and interest rates. Get real, guys.

I LUNCHEONED this week with Guy Hands, Nomura's head of principal finance. He's been in the news a lot lately, not least because of the reputed size of his earnings - said to have been £50m last year. Over the past couple of years, he's bought businesses on behalf of his Japanese backers direct as pubs, betting shops and a train leasing company. He even tried to buy the Energy Group, before retreating on grounds of price. These are all stable businesses with reasonably predictable income streams.

What Mr Hands does is to leverage the equity in these companies by securitising the cash flow - in essence investors are given rights in the form of bonds to a proportion of the company's income. The bonds alone will pay for the costs of the acquisition, and some. If all works out, the equity can be sold later at a thumping great profit too.

In the past I've expressed concern over this process, which I have regarded as a quite dangerous form of financial engineering. Mr Hands is a charming chap and he puts a convincing case. He half convinced me, in any case. Providing the process doesn't go too far, and is applied only to suitable businesses, it may be reasonably harmless. Certainly it is an ingenious way of pumping and realising value from a company.

However, there is plainly a point at which the process does go too far. Mr Hands may be getting the balance right, but as he and others admit, the competition for buyouts has become intense, driving up prices and increasing the degree of leverage required to hit the heady rates of return demanded of venture capitalists to alarming levels. It is not quite like the 1980s yet, but it's getting there.

The Nomura technique of securitisation, which many are now copying, is not quite the same thing as a leveraged buyout, but it is a variation of it. The buyout market as a whole is now reaching record levels in Europe, and in the US it is back to where it was in the 1980s. Typically a buyout specialist requires a 20 per cent plus return per annum on his investment.

Since such returns cannot, after the bulk of recent years, normally be achieved on conventional equity, it is done by leveraging the deal. Perhaps 50 per cent of the

purchase price gets funded from straight bank borrowings. Some 20 per cent is then paid for in the form of various classes of highly levered junk bonds, leaving the venture capitalist with 30 per cent equity. And he profits, with a bit of luck there's your 20 per cent return on equity, even though to achieve it the business has to be run for cash.

If the cost of the deal goes up, or the return demanded is higher, then the amount of leverage has to be increased correspondingly. That's precisely what's happening at the moment across a whole raft of buyouts. As I say, this may not be the 1980s all over again yet, but we are not far off.

FULL MARKS to Lord Wolfsen, chairman of GUS. He called the Argos bid, helped it to be said by some very highly paid advisers, just right. By going hostile from the outset, he paid less than he might have if he'd sought an agreed deal and, a gambler to the end, he refused to raise his price to a level that would guarantee success. As readers of these columns will know, we hacked the Argos defence, but that doesn't mean we didn't accept the commercial logic of putting the Argos catalogue into GUS's unrivalled home shopping network. We just thought Argos shareholders might be selling themselves short. Too late now.

Decaux faces £1m fine over monopoly

By Peter Thal Larsen

DECAUX, the French outdoor advertising company which has tabled a bid for More Group, its UK rival, is facing a fine from the French competition authorities for abuse of its monopoly position.

The French department for fraud control, a division of the Economic and Finance Ministry, is currently investigating Decaux's dominant position in the market for street furniture, such as bus shelters and toilets.

Although the investigation is ongoing, *The Independent* has seen a copy of the draft report drawn up by Jérôme Gallet, director general of the department. The report proposes that Decaux be fined FFr14.3m (£1.3m) for abuse of its position in the French market.

Last month, Decaux launched a £475m bid for More Group. The Office of Fair Trading is examining whether the offer, which trumped an earlier £466m offer by Clear Channel, the US media giant, should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. On Thursday, the OFT extended the period it uses to examine the case until the middle of May.

The OFT refused to say why it had extended the period, or whether it was aware of the French investigation. However, an OFT spokeswoman said the watchdog was in regular contact with similar bodies in other countries. "We take evidence from anyone who wants to give it to us."

The draft report targets two specific practices of Decaux's which it calls "monopoly". First, it criticises the length of street furniture contracts with local authorities, which usually run for 15 years. Second, the report points out that additional clauses in the contracts often allow Decaux to extend the contract

indefinitely without going through a competitive bid.

Jean-François Decaux, chairman and chief executive of Decaux, said: "It's a mischievous story," adding that the company would not comment while inquiries were under way.

The investigation is not the first time that Decaux has been in trouble with the competition authorities, who fined the company in the early Eighties.

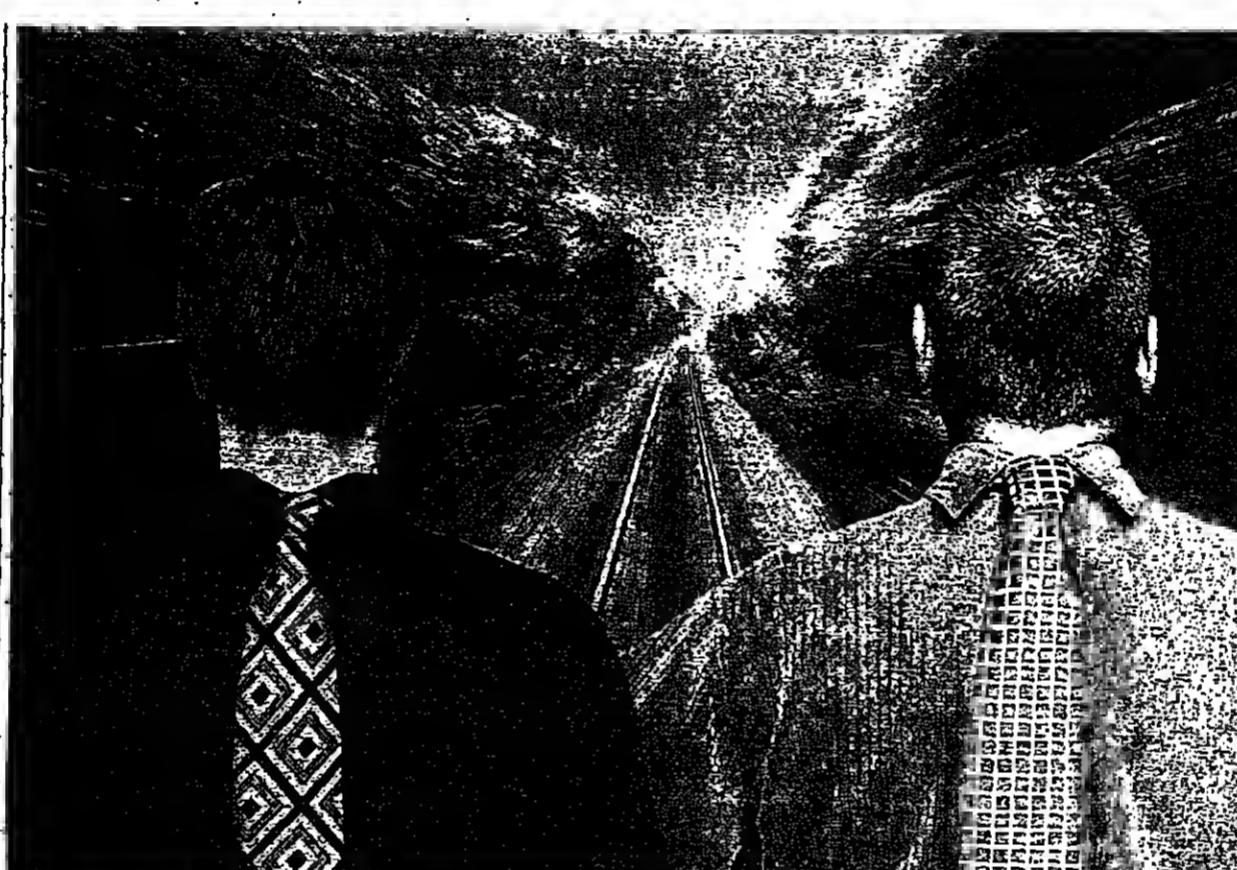
Decaux has long had a complete grip on the French street-furniture market, only breached when More won the contract to supply street furniture to the City of Rennes last year.

A successful bid for More would give Decaux a similar position in the UK. The two rivals control 90 per cent of the street-furniture market and between them have won all of the last 29 local authority contracts to have been awarded. However, Decaux argues that the market is merely a small part of the wider market for outdoor advertising, which includes billboards and hoardings on the side of buses.

Decaux yesterday said it had conducted a poll of local authorities which showed only 10 out of 100 would oppose the bid for More Group. Clear Channel had earlier conducted two smaller surveys which appeared to show widespread concern about the bid.

More Group has 21 per cent of the UK market for outdoor advertising, while Decaux has just a 3 per cent share.

Officially, More Group is maintaining a neutral line on the two competing bids pending the outcome of the OFT enquiry. However, More and Decaux are bitter competitors and Roger Purdy, More's chief executive, has made no secret of his belief that the culture clash between the two companies would prove insurmountable if a bid did succeed.



Back to front: Ray Kelvin, chief executive (right) and Lindsay Page, finance director of Ted Baker, the fashion retailer, which came to the stock market last summer. The company reported buoyant figures for last year with profits before flotation costs up 35 per cent to £20.7m and the shares, which have performed strongly, rose a further 8p to 177.5p.

The company said its women's wear range now accounted for 19 per cent of sales. It added that its boys' wear brand, Teddy Boy, was now established and that its new brand Edward Baker was "showing promise." Turnover was up 47 per cent to £20.7m and there is a maiden dividend of 3p per share. Exceptional costs related to the flotation were £685,000.

Robinson steps into row over PFI

By Michael Harrison

THE Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, yesterday stepped into a row over accounting standards that threatens to derail the Government's Private Finance Initiative.

Robinson said it had conducted a poll of local authorities which showed only 10 out of 100 would oppose the bid for More Group. Clear

Channel had earlier conducted two smaller surveys which appeared to show widespread concern about the bid.

More Group has 21 per cent of the UK market for outdoor advertising, while Decaux has just a 3 per cent share.

Officially, More Group is maintaining a neutral line on the two competing bids pending the outcome of the OFT enquiry. However, More and Decaux are bitter competitors and Roger Purdy, More's chief executive, has made no secret of his belief that the culture clash between the two companies would prove insurmountable if a bid did succeed.

Sir David has recommended that when the PFI is being used to procure an asset then the capital cost should be included in the PFSR. This, how-

ever, could kill off future PFI schemes as they would breach public spending controls.

Mr Robinson said that £2bn of schemes had been signed since the election, bringing the total to £8.9bn and he would not allow Sir David to "bring the whole PFI grinding to a halt."

He was speaking as the Treasury launched a scheme to give civil servants in depth training in handling PFI projects. Mr Robinson said the next drive would be to focus on PFI projects in the public sector covering health, schools, transport, waste and magistrates' courts.

In a speech to a PFI conference on Monday, Mr Robinson will say that all 29 recommendations in a report by Malcolm Bates last July on ways of improving the PFI have been implemented. The speech will also set out plans for developing the PFI further in the priority areas of health and education.

Pearson sells Future Publishing for £142m

By Nigel Cope

PEARSON, the Madame Tussauds to Financial Times media group, yesterday confirmed plans to sell its Future Publishing consumer magazines division to its management team for £142m.

Commenting on the disposal, Marjorie Scardino, Pearson's chief executive, said it will allow the management teams of Future and Edicorp "to focus on what they do best - produce great consumer magazines."

Pearson acquired Future and Edicorp in 1994 and 1996 respectively. In 1997, the businesses made operating profits of £9.3m on turnover of £81.5m. Net assets were £4.5m at 31 December.

Pearson said the deal was attractive because Future's magazines are in fast-growing markets. The deal will also form the platform for further expansion into Europe. Future already controls Edicorp, a consumer magazine publisher in France.

Edicorp's chief executive, Richard Pennycook, the new finance director, will be paid £160,000 plus 700,000 share options at the current price of 30.5p and 250,000 at 100p. Ng Kwan Cheong of MUI, the Malaysian investor, will receive £121,000 salary. Victoria Egan, who is joining the board, will be paid £200,000.

MEPC to return £300m after £1bn disposal programme

MEPC opened the way to return at least £300m to shareholders after completing the £1bn disposal of its overseas property assets yesterday. It sold a portfolio of office and industrial properties in the US consortium of US buyers for \$369m (£221m).

Last week it sold eight US shopping centres to General Growth Properties for \$87m (£52m), and in February it disposed of most of its Australian properties for around A\$500m (£196m). Work has begun on how to return capital to shareholders and the company is likely to make an announcement in the near future, MEPC's chief executive, Andrew Tuckey, said yesterday. Industry secretary Margaret Beckett yesterday decided not to refer the acquisition of some MEPC assets to Derwent Valley Holdings to the MMC.

De Benedetti exonerated

CARLO DE BENEDETTI, the Italian tycoon who was convicted seven years ago for involvement in the \$1.3bn collapse of Banco Ambrosiano, has been exonerated by an Italian supreme court. De Benedetti has fought to clear his name since he was convicted in 1991 with 32 others of causing the criminal bankruptcy. The case hit the headlines after the chairman, Roberto Calvi, was found hanging from Blackfriars Bridge in London. Yesterday, Mr Benedetti's lawyers said: "Justice has at last been done."

Laura Ashley disclosure

LAURA ASHLEY, the troubled fashion and home-furnishings retailer which announced a £44m rescue cash injection by a Malaysian conglomerate last week, has disclosed its directors' remuneration. David Hoare, who replaced Ann Iverson as chief executive last year, will receive a salary of £200,000 plus share options yet to be disclosed. Richard Pennycook, the new finance director, will be paid £160,000 plus 700,000 share options at the current price of 30.5p and 250,000 at 100p. Ng Kwan Cheong of MUI, the Malaysian investor, will receive £121,000 salary. Victoria Egan, who is joining the board, will be paid £200,000.

Co-Steel to sell up

Co-Steel, a Canadian industrial group, is to sell off its Sheerness plant in Kent following a call from a United Nations agency for a government inquiry into industrial relations at the works.

The highly unusual intervention of the UN's International Labour Office followed allegations by the TUC that union members were being intimidated. Senior management at the Sheerness plant, one of Europe's biggest steel mills, were accused of "undue interference with the legitimate exercise of trade union rights". The Canadian company has told their unions that the works is being sold because it is losing money.

Glaxo halts septic-shock drug

GLAXO WELLCOME has cancelled development of S46C88, a drug for the treatment of septic shock, a condition which kills about half the 500,000 patients it affects each year in North America and Europe. The drug was at the last stage before being filed for regulatory approval. Glaxo shares fell 32p to 1,558p.

Lawson retires from Barclays

LORD LAWSON, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, will retire as a director of Barclays Bank on 30 April. Lord Lawson, 66, has been a non-executive director of the bank since 1990, shortly after he resigned from Baroness Thatcher's government.

'Failings' of power companies

STEPHEN LITTLECHILD, the electricity regulator, yesterday attacked power companies for serious failings in their attempts to deal with the effects of storms over Christmas and New Year. In a report to the minister for science, energy and industry, he said: "There was substantial failure by several companies as regards communication with customers, which may have extended repair times in some areas."

Grafton buys British Dredging

GRAFTON, Ireland's largest builders merchants, yesterday agreed to buy British Dredging for £25.1m. The acquisition of the Birmingham-based builders merchant is a big step in the Irish company's strategy of expanding into the UK.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Ted Baker (P)	20.7m (14.8m)	5.66m (1.17m)	7.65p (0.51)	3.0p (-)
Joseph Holt (F)	30.78m (29.79m)	8.616m (8.392m)	21.35p (18.67p)	67.0p (50.0p)
Passage's Group (F)	5.12m (5.36m)	-0.162m (0.177m)	12.25p (14.25p)	1m
SBS Group (D)	11.3m (6.6m)	0.529m (0.353m)	5.2p (3.7p)	- (-)
(F) Final (D) Interim		EPS is pre-excepti		Dividend to be paid as a final

MPs back Nationwide on conversion vote

By Andrew Verity

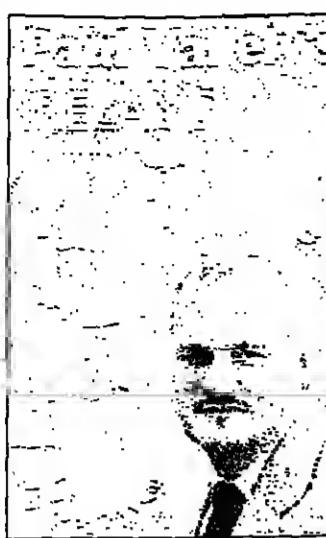
ONE HUNDRED MPs have attacked speculators for disrupting Nationwide's business by forcing it to hold its second vote in a year on converting to a bank.

The All-Party Building Societies Group today issued a statement saying it was "extremely regretful" that an election on the issue of conversion was again taking place at the building society's AGM in July. Last July, a candidate who wanted the bank to convert was defeated by a two-thirds majority.

Andrew Love, chairman of the group and Labour MP for Edmonton, said: "Building societies like Nationwide are now facing what is in effect a General Election on their future status every year. The issue of conversion was fully debated at the Nationwide last year when members voted overwhelmingly in favour of mutuality. It is regrettable that we are revisiting this old ground again this year."

Michael Hardens, the former builder who was defeated in the election last year, and Andrew Muir, a recruitment consultant from Slough, will both

Words of wisdom for lost souls



The Burren:

It seemed fitting to meet on this bare landscape to the south of Galway, with its limestone mountains, its neolithic dolmens and abandoned medieval churches



"TAKE your time now, there's no hurry," said the big chap behind me in the airplane gangway as I struggled to stow my luggage. I did a double-take. This was Heathrow, the world's busiest airport. Clearly this character had already switched the psychological equivalent of time zones and had abandoned the metropolitan impatience of the city.

We were bound for the west coast of Ireland. As we flew towards the setting sun the river Severn glistened 31,000ft below like the skin sloughed off by some giant snake.

"Remember," someone had once told me, "Ireland is a foreign country where they happen to speak English."

I suppose I had known that when I decided to extend the brief of this column from Britain to the British Isles in order to visit John O'Donohue in the area of wild bare countryside known as The Burren to the south of Galway, it seemed important to meet him there.

For the past 30 weeks a book written by him has been No 1 in the best-seller list in Ireland and yet it has so far been barely heard of in the United Kingdom.

Did it, I wondered, speak only to that dark thing in the Celtic soul which finds its reflection in the strange beauty of The Burren's landscape with its bald limestone mountains and sheltered valleys of pastureland, its neolithic dolmens and abandoned medieval churches.

its seasonal lakes which appear in the winter and vanish mysteriously in the late spring.

The book is called *Anam Cara: Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World*. Its subject is the human body and its psyche, friendship and solitude, ageing and death. Browsing through it in a bookshop you would be hard put to decide whether it was a profound work of modern mysticism or a piece of marketing magic.

A cynic might assume it to be the Celtic equivalent of *The Little Book of Calm* whose soothing platitudes have earned it 64 weeks in the British best-sellers as the definitive religious text for our times offering, as one critic memorably put it, "the comforts of religion with none of the aggravation".

The only thing is that this Big Book of Green is not written by a pop psychologist but by a man who is a priest, poet, philosopher and Hegelian scholar. Was it, I wondered, the last gasp of Irish Catholicism, the spiritual equivalent of *Rivendell*?

When we met next morning in a hotel in Ballyvaughan I put that to him. O'Donohue, a burly bearded bear of a man in his early 40s, laughed dismally and suggested that we walk by the ocean to talk about it.

The Mountains of Gleninagh tower 1,000ft directly above the rocky coastline there. We began our walk by an old well, its base littered

with the offerings of the superstitious. Ireland is a country where pantheism lingers beneath the Catholicism, even as the ghost of Castle letters behind the English which is now the everyday language.

O'Donohue's book is full of unchallenged references to the old ways – with stories like the Bean Si (banshee) who cries for someone about to die or the man who stumbled upon a fairy village and stayed a few hours only to find who he returned home he had been missing a fortnight.

It is not the stuff you would expect from a Catholic priest. "I wanted to celebrate that world, not critique it," O'Donohue responded. "I'm just asking what such stories tell us of what is missing from our present daily reality. The poverty of so much modern discussion is that it has no such glances at the corners of the mystery of human existence."

The limits of our language are the limits of our world; to enrich one we must attend to the other. "Look how the light changes over the sea," he said suddenly. The steely grey-blue sky had taken on the eerie translucent quality which I had noticed across the bay at twilight the night before.

As the waves crashed in a white tumult upon the solid rock along the sea-strand I began to wonder what he meant when he had written of

the chthonic ocean and the silence of the stone.

In places its short sentences – like a series of connected epigrams – read with unsatisfying vagueness. O'Donohue's fecund supply of poetic metaphor can be cloying, like eating a box of chocolates all in one go. In places they are undiscerning – his thoughts about the darkest hour being before dawn made me think only of that old song by The Mamas and The Papas, "Dedicated to the one I love" (he had the good grace to groan and laugh when I told him).

All this made me resist the text. But as I read on I found I had suspended my scepticism and given myself over to it. I began to deal with his vision in its own terms and then allowed myself to find parts of it profound and moving.

There was something of the same mixture in O'Donohue himself. As we walked the words poured from him in a torrent of erudition, self-deprecating humour, vivid images and unexpected insights. "Friendship offers a challenge to the blind spot in the psyche; in nature we never see our own faces, others see them for us," he said at one point.

After two hours walk by a rock shore dotted with primroses and with hedges white with hawthorn blossom, we came across a group of wild goats with their kids. "When the goats come down the mountain it's a sign of bad weather," he said. "The people of the old times knew by instinct and observation what we have to consciously learn," he said. If prompted him to thoughts on this interpretation has replaced the text in the flat two-dimensionality of the second-hand modern life. But the main point was that it was about to rain and that we should turn back.

We walked through the shower back to the pub and a feast of oysters and Guinness. "The dominant trend in the 20th century is that established by logical positivism; only that which can be empirically verified is true. That appeals to the English sense of pragmatism."

"England is a land of systematic philosophy; Ireland is a place of invention, rediscovery, rearrangement of every," he said. It is a land of contradictions, he said.

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TOMORROW IN THE SEVEN-SECTION
INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY



THE WORLD AT HIS FEET

Ronaldo is the greatest and most expensive footballer on earth. But what is he really like? Frans Oosterwijk spent five years finding out

Plus

■ The double life of Gwyneth Paltrow
■ Part three of the ultimate guide to seafood
■ Does fat make you forgetful?



TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 25 April 1998



PICTURE OF THE WEEK Rose leaf unfurled in the early morning dew, by Brian Harris. To order a 12x9in print (price £15) call 0171-293 2534

Week in, week out

William Hartston worries about the sins people might be committing with a reindeer in the front of an ice-cream van

A survey of 18- to 40-year-olds by the car and bike magazine *Redline* this week revealed that 35 per cent of respondents said they had oral sex performed on them while driving, and 8 per cent had had full sex. Furthermore, 24 per cent said they had driven a car at more than 140mph on a British road, 27 per cent had steered a car with their feet, 20 per cent had successfully chatted up someone in another car, and 33 per cent had never had an accident. Making certain assumptions, we may deduce this suggests that more than one in 100 of our young drivers may have had a particularly nasty accident while having oral sex performed on them at 140mph while steering with their feet. And that could throw some light on the rest of the week's news.

For a start, there was another survey this time from the RAC - which revealed that only 49 per cent of adults wear seatbelts in the back of cars. Well, with 24 per cent driving at 140 mph, and another 27 per cent steering with their

feet, is it any surprise that the remaining 49 per cent prefer a hit of bondage on the back seat?

The RAC report also claimed that "only a small minority" of drivers (8.5 per cent) and passengers (9 per cent) risk not belting up in the front. That means that a minimum of 26 per cent keep their seatbelts on while having oral sex. It's good to know that the safe sex message is getting through at last.

All this information enabled us to put in better perspective a report from Florida of a traffic warden sticking a parking ticket on a car without noticing that a man was dying inside having been tied up and shot in the head. After all the other embarrassing things they might have seen going on in cars is it any wonder that traffic wardens just want to get on with their job while averting their gaze from the inside of the vehicle?

There was better news in a drink-driving case in Finland, where the judge said that the man who rammed his car

into a Santa Claus sleigh that was being pulled by a reindeer last Christmas deserved leniency. His surprise at seeing Father Christmas and the reindeer was, in the judge's opinion, partly to blame for the crash. And if you have ever seen an elderly bearded man in a sexually excited

state trying to steer a reindeer with his feet, I am sure you will agree with the judge. The driver of the car was aged 69, incidentally.

There was good news for anyone who gets up to any of the above sinful practices and feels the need to repent. In

INSIDE

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Tea tops in Darjeeling

48 hours in Athens

■ GARDENING

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London Marathon: Britain's challenge

Colombia: where drugs and football unite

Can Arsenal repeat the Double feat of 1971?

Poland, a computer program has been designed to aid confession. It is said to be "based on the prayer book" and poses the user 104 questions to help keep track of their sins. Individual sins are listed under the Ten Commandments, with a questionnaire asking whether they have been committed or not.

News from Michigan, however, suggests that sinners need not worry about confessing for the next three months, because the road to Hell is blocked by repair work. The little town of Hell in

Michigan (one of the two Hells on earth - the other is in Norway) has lost its link to the outside world as the town's main bridge is being repaved. However good the intentions of the repaving of the bridge to Hell, it is causing traffic chaos and keeping tourists away. "It'll close the whole town," said Hell Chamber of Commerce president Jim Ley. "That's where our money comes from. It'll kill us."

Is it any wonder, then, that Pope John Paul II this week said that although the

end of the world would certainly come some day, it was useless to try to predict when. "Illusory and misleading" was how he described attempts to predict the date of Armageddon - and no wonder! After all, it can hardly happen when the road to Hell is down, and when that's fixed, the millennium bug will probably have buggered up all that useful Judgement Day evidence on confessional computers. It could take years to get it all fixed in time for the end of the world.

Finally, in Stafford Township, New Jersey, an ice-cream man, Jeffrey Cabaniss, has won a court battle to keep playing his favourite song, "Turkey in the Straw", through his van's loudspeakers. Local residents had complained that the song was "discordant", "monotonous" and "a form of torture". The judge ruled that hearing other people's music was one of the "inconveniences of living in a free society". The percentage of ice-cream vendors who enjoy oral sex while listening to "Turkey in the Straw" is, sadly, unknown.

Jog your mind

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SIMON CALDER

Twenty months, and counting. In particular, the travel industry is counting on huge earnings from the global collective madness that will accompany the arrival of the year 2000. But anyone who cares about the world, and travelling, should be seriously bugged by the millennium. Not on philosophical grounds – though the concept of celebrating the anniversary of the date when a figure, not worshipped by most of the world's population, wasn't born, taxes credibility – but on the dreadful distortions caused by our fixation on this utterly arbitrary date.

I love travelling, and I love parties, and if in 1999 you'd like to combine the two then allow me to suggest some possibilities: Cornwall, 11 August, when a genuine astronomical event – the only total solar eclipse that most Britons will experience in their lifetime – will be accompanied by much jollity; Macau, 21 December, when Europe's colonial grip on Asia will be eased by Portugal's handing of its tiny possession to China; Panama, 31 December, when the United States will revoke its control of the Canal Zone, the symbolic link between Atlantic and Pacific that is being liberated for the 21st century. Handily, the ceremony is scheduled for lunch time on New Year's Eve, which should leave the evening free for copious consumption of the appropriately named Soberana beer.

On second thoughts, don't go to Panama. Don't get involved in the highly stressful and expensive jostling for millennium position. Pent-up demand for trains, boats, planes and rooms is likely comprehensively to outstrip supply, as we move towards the peak of the world's greatest-ever travel frenzy. And don't blame the airlines, hotels and tourist boards for cashing in. If we travellers are mug enough to buy the image of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to visit a place which (before and after the millennium) will be as wonderful as ever, then why shouldn't the travel industry profit? Because the one post-millennium certainty is a huge slump in travel.

It's the Hong Kong syndrome. We bought the myth that the former British colony had to be visited before the handover to the People's Republic last June. We also bought the unspoken corollary that Hong Kong wouldn't be worth the trip once it was part of China. Result: the cost of a week's holiday in Hong Kong in 1998 has halved, compared with a year ago. For real bargains, wait for the first few months of 2000.

To find out where not to go, you could consult a brace of books, the first in a flood of millennium travel guides. Reading between the lines of *The Millennium: the Rough Guide* by Nick Hanna (£5) and Richard Knight's *Millennium Guide* (Travelblazer, £4.99) will suggest the places to visit once all the Date Line tourists have gone home. Tonga, for example, where the International Date Line Hotel has been fully booked for a decade; I bet you can get a good rate on the night of 31 January 2000. Or Fiji, which will be an antediluvian archipelago following its curious millennial wheeze of illuminating the 180-degree line of longitude to make it visible from space. Closer to home, expect a glut of cheap Caribbean cruises during the post-holiday hangover.

So if these are the places where you should go, but not for the millennium, where should you be on New Year's Eve 1999? With friends and family, of course.

If location really is important, then try the one place which has so far eluded the compilers of millennial meanderings: Cleethorpes. The Lincolnshire resort straddles the Greenwich meridian, and usually has plenty of hotel rooms available over the winter. Failing that, make for Caroline Island, part of Kiribati in the South Pacific, whose government has unilaterally shifted the Date Line thousands of miles east. Perhaps Cleethorpes could try it.

The new books continue the travel trend of long, rambling acknowledgements. Richard Knight thanks 23 individuals (including Simon "Colonel" Doody and Geraint "Grun" James) plus his family and a myriad of millennium organisations, tourist boards and travel companies. Nick Hanna covers the same terrain, but singles out the Aldred Road Hotel for "unstinting hospitality, sanctuary and very reasonable room rates".

The travel desk here has few rules. One is that all travel and accommodation must be paid for at full price. Another is that if a story deals exclusively with a single street, the accompanying photograph should be of that thoroughfare rather than of a road some 20 miles away. Last week, for my story on Broadway, Los Angeles, we broke rule two: as many of you spotted, the photograph was of Hollywood Boulevard. Sorry.



Dropping a clanger: metal is poured into a bell mould at John Taylor's foundry in Loughborough

Photograph: John Vooz

The ring leaders

On the stroke of midnight on 31 December 1999, and again 12 hours later, thousands of bell-ringers will put Britain into a glorious, tuneful frenzy. Across the nation ringers will be welcoming the year 2000 with ringing peals.

The preparation for this is certainly no mean feat. For some it has meant lengthy restoration projects for their church bell towers, while others have ordered new bells especially for the occasion – the Millennium Commission has pumped £3m towards the £6m project co-ordinated by the Central Council of Church Bells. And, relatively speaking, there has been a rush to get unringable bells restored and new bells cast in time for the big day.

All of which has brought a welcome boost for business at the largest bell foundry in the world, John Taylor's in Loughborough. It has also brought an increase in visitors to the small museum attached to the works. The foundry itself usually makes about 70 bells a year, but Alan Berry, the managing director, reckons that millennium orders have almost doubled production. "Towards the end of last year things started to move," he said. "We seem to be about twice as busy before."

Almost every time a church bell is cast at the foundry the parishioners of the client church are keen to share in the moment in history when "their" bell is made (after all, they are hardly likely to be around for the next such occasion, since a bell is expected to last for at least 500 years). Their visit

If you want to fly anywhere for the millennium you have to book now. Wrong. In fact, if Virgin Atlantic is right, it would be sensible not to fly anywhere at all over that period. The "millennium bug" could put aircraft, air traffic control and reservation systems worldwide into an almighty millennial spin. "We want to be assured that our airports are going to be functioning safely before we start organising flights," said a Virgin Atlantic spokesman emphatically. "Then we will start looking at the commercial opportunities." Other airlines point out that bookings cannot be made anyway until 1 January 1999, as their reservation systems take bookings only 364 days in advance. A spokesman at United Airlines said: "We have 2,000 flights a day, and sell more than 100 million seats a year – to mess with that system so that we can book an extra six months in advance is a major programming exercise."

So, if you want to spend the millennium out of the UK, relax. You could even wait to September 1999 and reserve a seat to Paris on Eurostar, for which bookings can be made a maximum of 90 days in advance. Alternatively, charter a Eurostar train to the French capital – if you have enough mates.

Christmas and New Year are normally the highest of high seasons for airlines, hotels and car rental companies. Could it be that prices are being withheld deliberately to maximise earnings from the millennium? Most companies *The Independent* talked to denied anything so calculated, and maintained it was just "too early to think about it".

As Britain makes plans to celebrate the millennium in style church bells are already in heavy demand all around the country. Louise Duffield visits the world's biggest bell foundry to see the preparations

usually encompasses a tour of the works, a look around the small museum, and the big moment itself when molten metal is poured into the unique mould that will produce the new bell.

Therefore, to get the most out of a visit to the bell foundry it is a good idea to link in with a group scheduled to watch a casting. I duly called the museum's curator and arranged my visit to coincide with that of parishioners from All Saints church, Kilham, near Driffield. They had travelled from East Yorkshire to Leicestershire to see two new bells coming to life. For them it marked the beginning of the end of a £205,000 tower restoration project and a major fundraising appeal. And indeed it was a splendid occasion for them. "It's wonderful to see, because this is the completion of our project on the tower," said Sue Dawson, chairman of the restoration appeal and the Friends of Kilham Church.

No two tours of the foundry are likely to be exactly the same. This is because not all bell-making processes will be running at the same time. But what the tour will reveal is just how lengthy a job making and tuning a bell can be, and how the process

has hardly changed over hundreds of years. It can take not just days, but weeks – from the casting to the fine tuning when tiny "shavings" are pared away from inside the bell. At Taylors, the machine that carries out the tuning was designed and built in 1895.

Our guided trip around the foundry was, of course, the highlight of the visit – greatly adding to the exhibits in the little museum. This; as it is so small, is run single-handed and tends to be shut when the curator is giving a tour. Visitors are advised to telephone to find out museum opening times, the schedule for castings and when behind-the-scenes tours are planned.

The museum itself is fairly basic and is centred on three rooms which feature the history of bell founding and take a look back over the years since 1784 when the Taylor family first became involved in the business. For almost 200 years the foundry remained in their hands, until the death of Paul Lea Taylor in 1981.

One of the high points in the foundry's story came in 1882, when it cast Great Paul to hang in St Paul's Cathedral. Lengthy articles in the national

newspapers of the day covered the founding and transporting to London of the 16-ton bell, which cost £3,000. Not all the foundry's customers were – and are – so well known, but bells from Taylors can be seen in churches, public buildings and companies all over the world.

Meanwhile, molten metal and glass cases may be part of the mix of a visit here, but this is no hands-on experience. After hearing and seeing so much about bells during a tour of the works, it comes as a relief to be able to ring some of the examples in the museum (you can't help feeling that there's something about bells that say "please ring us"). And as you do so, you'll get a gentle forecast of the glorious sounds of the millennium celebrations to come.

The Bell Foundry Museum, Freehold Street, Loughborough, Leicestershire (01509 23 3414) is open Tuesdays-Friday and summer Saturdays, 10am-12.30pm, 1.30pm-4.30pm Sundays, and winter Saturdays by arrangement. It is closed between Christmas and New Year, and on Good Friday and Easter Tuesday. As there is only one staff member, the museum is also closed at unscheduled times so it is advisable to check that it is open before planning a visit. The curator will also give details of tours and castings, which are held irregularly. Admission: museum, £1; adults, 50p; children aged five to 15, 25p. Tours and museum entry, £3 adults, £1.50 children.

But the fact that British Airways has received a staggering 250,000 inquiries from people who want to celebrate the millennium aboard Concorde shows that lots of potential revellers have thought about it. A dream for many people is to celebrate the millennium three times in London, on board Concorde in the mid-Atlantic, and on arrival at New York.

Hotels are several months ahead of the carriers. Some are already taking bookings or will be releasing details this summer. This means that prospective millennium globe-trotters may need to book their hotels before they have secured a flight.

If you don't want to take the risk of either not being able to get a flight or not being able to fly because of the millennium bug, then it looks as if home may be a good place to stay. English Country Cottages still has 2,500 cottages available – and all you'll have to battle with is traffic or trains.

To secure both transport and accommodation in one go, the best option is probably a cruise. Which is presumably why Princess Cruises are already fully booked for trips to the Caribbean. Other Caribbean cruise lines will be releasing their itineraries within the next few months.

Keith Betton, head of corporate affairs for the Association of British Travel Agents, seems to think that millennium fever is pretty much media hype anyway. "Most people are going to stay at home with their friends and family," he said. "I don't think that the millennium means very much to the average person."

New year's revelations

Will the millennium bug cause travel chaos? It's possible. So for the moment the best thing to do is sit back and relax, writes Sue Wheat

What airlines say they will do about travel over New Year 1999

Company	Taking bookings?	Special plans?	Phone number
Air New Zealand	Temporarily – our computer isn't set up for it yet.	No plans as yet	0181 741 2299
American Airlines	Bookings start 1 Jan 1999	Not particularly. Normal cheap fares may not be available	0345 789789
British Airways	Bookings start 1 Jan 1999	No	0245 222111
Virgin Atlantic	Definite no – because of the possibility of the "Millennium Bug" threatening safety	No	01283 747747
United Airlines	Bookings start 1 Jan 1999	No. Millennium bug a priority	0181 990 9900
Air France	Not yet	No.	0181 742 6600
British Midland	Bookings start 1 Jan 1999	No	0345 554554
Eurostar	No. Will be 90 days in advance as normal.	Full Xmas and New Year service: 20 departures to Paris – 760 seats per train. Can charter Eurostar. Won't run Xmas day or over New Year's Eve	0245 803030 Charter sales: 0171 922 4542

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Tiffin territory

Forget the snow-capped mountains and the Buddhist prayer flags, Darjeeling is really the Crawley of the Himalayas, writes Simon Calder as he takes tea and savours the romance of the place



The performance possessed balletic precision. The brew described a perfect arc from the spout, a bridge almost as pale as the bone-china crockery which it linked. With a fluid elegance, the liquor gathered colour and strength as it flooded towards the rim. Whispers of steam escaped from the smoky brown surface, mimicking the wisps dancing from Athena's cigarette. In the background, Ravi Shankar coaxed a implausible jostle of scales from his sitar.

This enthrallment took place in 1972. The music was from that summer's Concert

for Bangladesh. Athena

Aly was quite the most exotic person at school: she had a Welsh mother and an Indian father, and had been born in Darjeeling. That the family now lived in Crawley served only to heighten the appeal of her origins to a spotty Sussex youth like me. But it was to be another quarter-century before a hilariously overloaded and under-powered steam train wheezed with relief as it deposited me and several hundred other seekers after divine tea.

Darjeeling isn't like India. Grey of stone and grey of sky, it's like Burton—a high old town at the end of a rocky old railway line, marooned sufficiently far from the rest of the world for a mid-century, middle-class layer of middle England to have settled like a duvet between the hills and the clouds.

But unlike Derbyshire, Darjeeling rewards the visitor with the sight of decorative Buddhist prayer flags and frequent glimpses of Kangchenjunga, the world's third-highest peak. The snow-covered massif seems to follow you around the sinuous streets and hunching hills of the town, reminding you that the European is here on sufferance.

The municipal monarch commands the curious neck of territory through which India squeezes on her way to the north-eastern hill states. The tortuous frontiers speak of all kinds of political shenanigans in a part of the world where Bhutan, Sikkim, China, Nepal and Bangladesh crowd in on India. Until recently you needed a special permit to visit Darjeeling.

It was a frontier dispute that drew British officials here in 1828. They spotted the potential of a crescent-shaped ridge as a hill station to relieve expatriates sweating in Calcutta. The North East Frontier Railway—a

sturdier title than its "Toy Train" nickname—was completed in 1882, linking Darjeeling with the vast iron web of India's rail network by way of an improbable switchback that allows a Scottish locomotive to claw its way up the Himalayan foothills.

As with Crawley, a new town was rapidly created. It was fitted out with all manner of colonial accoutrements that you might think singularly out of place at 7,000ft, but which are strangely comforting—notably the Wimadene Hotel, which crowns the ensemble.

Daintily decorated with cream and green paint, in the manner of a seaside boarding-house, the hotel cossets guests with hot-water bottles—just the sort of security you need as you stare across the vast valley to Kangchenjunga, for which the term "brooding" could have been coined.

A London doctor has already booked three rooms for 31 December 1999. "We cannot think of a nicer place in which to welcome the new millennium," says a fax pinned up in the hotel.

The visitor is provided with many maps of Darjeeling, painted over any spare wall beneath slogans such as "come as a guest, go as a friend".

All of them are wrong. Clumsy cartography, though, is a benefit in Darjeeling. You may set off to find your way to the

Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre, but there's a good chance you'll end up instead at the gripping Himalayan Mountain Institute.

The late Tenzing Norgay, half of the first successful conquest of Everest in 1953, used to head the institute; the equipment used by him and Sir Edmund Hillary looks pitifully ancient compared with the gear belonging to those trekking around Darjeeling.

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ancient compared with the gear belonging to those trekking around Darjeeling.

The institute majors on the spell cast

by the world's highest mountain, and lists all those who reached the summit over the next 40 years, concluding with the cheerfully misspelt G F Hopland (Graham Hopland, who writes for these pages, climbed Everest in 1993).

As the relief map of the Himalayas shows, Everest stands 140 miles away, on the frontier between Nepal and Tibet. And if you rise at 3am, you may see it. A fleet of Ambassador taxis departs Darjeeling at this ungodly hour each morning, winding up eight miles away atop Tiger Hill. Along with a thousand others, I shivered while the



Tea total: the bushes and Buddhist prayer flags of Darjeeling

Photographs: SB Paul McCullagh (main picture), Gavin Hellier/Robert Harding Picture Library

sun made up its mind to dazzle us with the dawn vision of the Himalayas. You don't need good binoculars to realise that this magical field of vision contains four of the world's five highest peaks (K2, the missing mountain, is hidden away in Pakistan).

Humble and hungry, you stumble down the track back to town—and discover that this is one part of India where hitch-hiking is (a) accepted and (b) easy. A bunch of soldiers, off duty from guarding miscellaneous frontiers, deposited me outside the railway station, where a map misdirects visitors to the Happy Valley Tea Estate.

The tea bushes clinging to the hillsides around Darjeeling form an ocean of green, rippling in the breeze and speckled with tiny figures who wade through at shoulder height. The pickers' taut brown faces study the leaves intently as they snip away and stash the precious crop in what look like outsize laundry baskets borne on the back. The harvest is unloaded at a rustic factory, where visitors may poke around as the leaves are dried, rolled, fermented and graded: Golden Supreme, Supreme, Broken Orange Pekoe, Family Mix—and right at the bottom of the pot, tea-hags.

By the time you have clambered back to the town, you will be gasping for a cup of tea. At Didi's tea shop, the Second Guard from the train that brought me to Darjeeling introduced himself and shared a pot with me. The ceremony, and the company of this gentle Gurkha, turned out to be more congenial than the cup—a touch too bitter, I thought, and several shades away from the perfect pale gold that I remembered. Family Mix, perhaps? Indisputably refreshing, nonetheless, endowing the afternoon's ambles with increased vigour. As you pass the Holy Angels School for the Under-

privileged, you realise that anyone able to visit Darjeeling is indisputably overprivileged. Athena, meanwhile, still lives in Crawley.

Simon Calder paid £1,300 for an inclusive tour taking in Delhi, Jaipur, Agra, Varanasi, Calcutta and Darjeeling. This included flights to and from Delhi on Air India, and trains and planes within the country.

Air India serves Darjeeling tea in flight—but only to business class and first class passengers. Economy class passengers are served Taj Mahal blended tea, mostly Assam.

Coffee, coffee everywhere, and not a drop to drink

"Tea or coffee?" It was breakfast time in Kerala—a mellow, rich state that runs up the south-eastern tip of India in the same way Chile does in South America—and I was sitting in a wicker armchair looking out over the Arabian Sea. A few miles behind, the green Western Ghats that border Kerala and the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu rise up to the spectacular Cardamom Hills. And all over these steep, rolling mountains, dotted between cool hill stations, are plantations of cardamom, cocoa, rubber, cashews, tea—and coffee.

You don't usually go to India for the coffee, but I was on a personal quest. Spiritual enlightenment, cultural enrichment; even trekking seemed tasks too ambitious for a two-week holiday. I was here to rest—and to find out about the local brews.

I had fantasised about a rich, aromatic cup of dark, "interesting" coffee. Something that would give an Indian kick-start to every day. I would search everywhere and perhaps, in a small coffee house for plantation workers, I would triumphantly buy some beans—after a little persuasion—and shake them at any unbelievers.

A modest ambition, but it was day three and already I was a little desperate, as any caffeine addict will understand. I had been served Nescafe powder with hot water in a five-star hotel, powdered coffee from the local market mixed with 50 per cent chickpea to bring out the flavour—in other, I had barely brewed a cup in this beach hut restaurant in Varkala, even if it did call itself The Italian Cafe, and cappuccino was top of the

Never mind the elephants, what about the caffeine? Miranda Haines sets off in search of the perfect Indian brew in Kerala

menu. Third time lucky, I reasoned: "A cappuccino please." It came, half an hour later, in a glass milky, a faint taste of crushed celery and a hint of a light brown colour. I quickly ordered a freshly squeezed orange juice and decided that it was a good time to push into the hills to see if the people who grow the stuff also enjoy drinking it.

Quite by chance, on my first night in the Surya Sumudra Garden hotel near Kovalam, I had met Simon, an Indian estate owner and occasional guide. "I have an organic coffee farm," he told me. "I will take you there—and then to Periyar Wildlife Park, where you can see wild elephant."

"Never mind the elephant. Can you find me a good cup of Indian coffee?" I asked, a little more bluntly than was intended. "Yes, yes. We can drive up to my estate on Saturday, as I have to pay my workers' wages, and I will show you everything."

Simon and I set off in his jeep from Varkala, over the fiercely hot and bone-rattling roads, stopping only to buy mangoes, cigarettes, and fresh coconuts to quench our thirst. Gradually we climbed higher, passing forests of rosewood, teak, sandalwood, eucalyptus, flowering trees, pepper vines, cardamom, bananas, papayas and roses. I smelt great wafts of nectar through the car window, and saw green peppers laid out to dry in the sun.

At Mundakayam we stopped for lunch in a colonial club settled in the middle of a rubber plan-

gins in an ancient form of martial arts, *kalari-payattu*—was to last until 5am next day.

At dinner that night I chatted for hours on the veranda with Maria and her first cousin, Roshni, about what schools they should send their children to, how hard their husbands worked, and the weather (a heat wave and a drought this year). After dinner, we had a powdered coffee that tasted like all the other stuff I was by now resigned to drinking. Maria explained: "Today, we took our beans which we had sun-dried ourselves, to the mill for them to roast and grind. But it was on strike. We will have to wait."

The next day I drank tea for breakfast to wash down a *masala dhoos* and set off excitedly to see the wild elephants in Periyar Wildlife Park.

The estate manager, a tiny, wiry young man, accepted the wages and handed Simon a parcel of fresh onions to take home to his wife, Maria. The next day we travelled back down the valley to Tiruvalla to stay the night in their spacious traditional wooden house. A large white church opposite the front gate was built by Simon's family and donated to the village. Just up the road in a Hindu temple, a *kathakali* dance—the stunning traditional Malayalam art that has its ori-

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Regenerated, restored Birmingham is an inspiring, exciting city: you name it, they have it – art, sculpture, hands-on galleries. Three 10-year-olds were impressed, as Catherine Stebbings found out

A cynic might say that obliging a family to spend a day in Birmingham constitutes a cruel and unusual punishment. Yet this is a city that really does have plenty to appeal. The revamping of the centre over the past two decades has redeemed it as an exciting and inspiring place to be. There is a glorious architectural mix of old and new: highly ornate late Victorian and classical buildings stand alongside architecture of the Nineties. Behind them the intriguing Jewellery Quarter is still a hive of activity. Meanwhile, colourful houseboats line the canals that cross the city centre.

Birmingham was once known as the "city of a thousand trades", and many of them are still practised here today. The city is still growing, still deeply rooted in international business and trade and still home to a highly cosmopolitan community, reflected in the diversity of shops, markets, cafés and restaurants.

the diversity of shops, markets, cafés and restaurants. There are many reminders of its historic past, not least the number of museums, galleries and stately homes (some of which offer free entry to visitors). The centre is an excellent place to start, with museums, good shopping and canal-side walks all within a few hundred yards of one another.

Birmingham's museum and art gallery opened in 1885, in order to educate local artisans and inspire them to compete with the Continent. Perhaps best known for its impressive collection of Pre-Raphaelite art, the museum also has some exciting modern works, including silverware, textiles and ceramics as well as some intriguing ancient art and Egyptian collections. In contrast the Natural History gallery is top notch, featuring top birds, beasts and bones.

there are good natural history galleries for birds, beasts and bones, and a popular "light on science" gallery.

Meanwhile, the centre of the city, much of it pedestrianised, offers a series of delightful squares, fountains and imaginative sculpture, such as the huge *Iron Man* by Anthony Gormley, a precursor of his, *Angel of the North*, in Victoria Square. The area bustles with shoppers, street musicians and other life. Perhaps most impressive is Centenary Square, one of the biggest squares in Europe, which sprawls out of the innovative, modern and frantic International Conference Centre (ICC). Behind the ICC, join the canal-side walk or check out the latest contemporary art exhibi-

If it's wet, then take a break in the public library where regular story reading and craft sessions take place in the Centre for the Child. Alternatively, admire the Burne-Jones stained-glass windows in St Philip's Cathedral on Colmore Row.

For those with more stamina, a short bus ride can take you to many other free attractions. Admire the long gallery at the Jacobean Aston Hall, visit a yeoman's farmhouse at Blakesley Hall, discover the 14th-century ruins of Wooley Castle or tackle the university's stunning collection of paintings at the Barber Institute of Fine Art.

lute of Fine Art.

A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a modern architectural complex. The central focus is a large, dark wall with a prominent, textured grid pattern. To the left of this wall is a white, rectangular structure with a small, dark opening. In the foreground, a curved, illuminated walkway or path leads towards the wall. The background is dark and indistinct, suggesting a nighttime or low-light environment. The overall composition is minimalist and architectural.

A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a large, dark, rectangular structure, possibly a stadium or industrial building, with a bright, overexposed sky above it. The image is framed by a thick black border.

Face-lift: the revamping of Birmingham over the past two decades has resulted in a city that is genuinely fun to visit. Photographs: Tom Pilston

never get bored. It's an arty city, there was sculpture everywhere. I liked the Impressionist paintings in the art gallery best. I thought the Pre-Raphaelite paintings were so detailed that some looked like photographs, but I didn't like their choice of colours, they were too bright to look natural. However, the colours worked really nicely in the stained-glass windows by Burne-Jones that we saw later in the cathedral.

I couldn't look at pictures all day. The walk along the canal made a nice break, and the science hit in the afternoon was really good.

Birmingham orientation
Transport and parking: Birmingham's mainline stations, New Street and Snow Hill, are 10 minutes' walk from the centre. There are

and Snow Hill, are 10 minutes walk from the centre. There are numerous car parks in the centre, but traffic is busy.
Tourist information: 2 City Arcade (0121 643 2514); ICC, Broad Street, Birmingham (0121 665 6116).
Free attractions: Museum and Art Gallery, Chamberlain Square (0121 235 2834), open Mon-Sat 11am-5pm, Sun 12.30pm-5pm; Ikon Gallery, Ooseill Square, Brindleyplace (01 21 248 0708), open Tues-Sat 11am-7pm, Sun 11am-5pm; Birmingham Central Library, 200 Corporation Street, Birmingham (0121 236 6000), open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 9am-1pm; Birmingham Botanical Gardens, 100 Corporation Street, Birmingham (0121 236 6000), open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 9am-1pm; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 100 Corporation Street, Birmingham (0121 236 6000), open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 9am-1pm; Birmingham Central Library, 200 Corporation Street, Birmingham (0121 236 6000), open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 9am-1pm; Birmingham Botanical Gardens, 100 Corporation Street, Birmingham (0121 236 6000), open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 9am-1pm;

Tues-Sat, 11am-7pm, Sun 11am-5pm. Birmingham Canal Navigation's extensive network is open to pedestrians, good around the recently developed Gas Street basin area. Central library, Chamberlain Square (0121 303 4511), offers story-telling and craft sessions throughout the holidays.

Shops: The centre is crammed with modern malls, Victorian arcades and indoor markets. And, of course, jewellery of all

an arcades and indoor markets. And, of course, jewellery of all sorts is found in the Jewellery Quarter. Good markets for jewellery, antiques, textiles, retro wear and lots more around Pershore Street.

Food and drink: A good selection of fun places to eat in the city centre is found in Brindleyplace, next door to the International Convention Centre alongside the canal. The Edwardian tea room in the museum and art gallery is a pleasant stop; other cafés and

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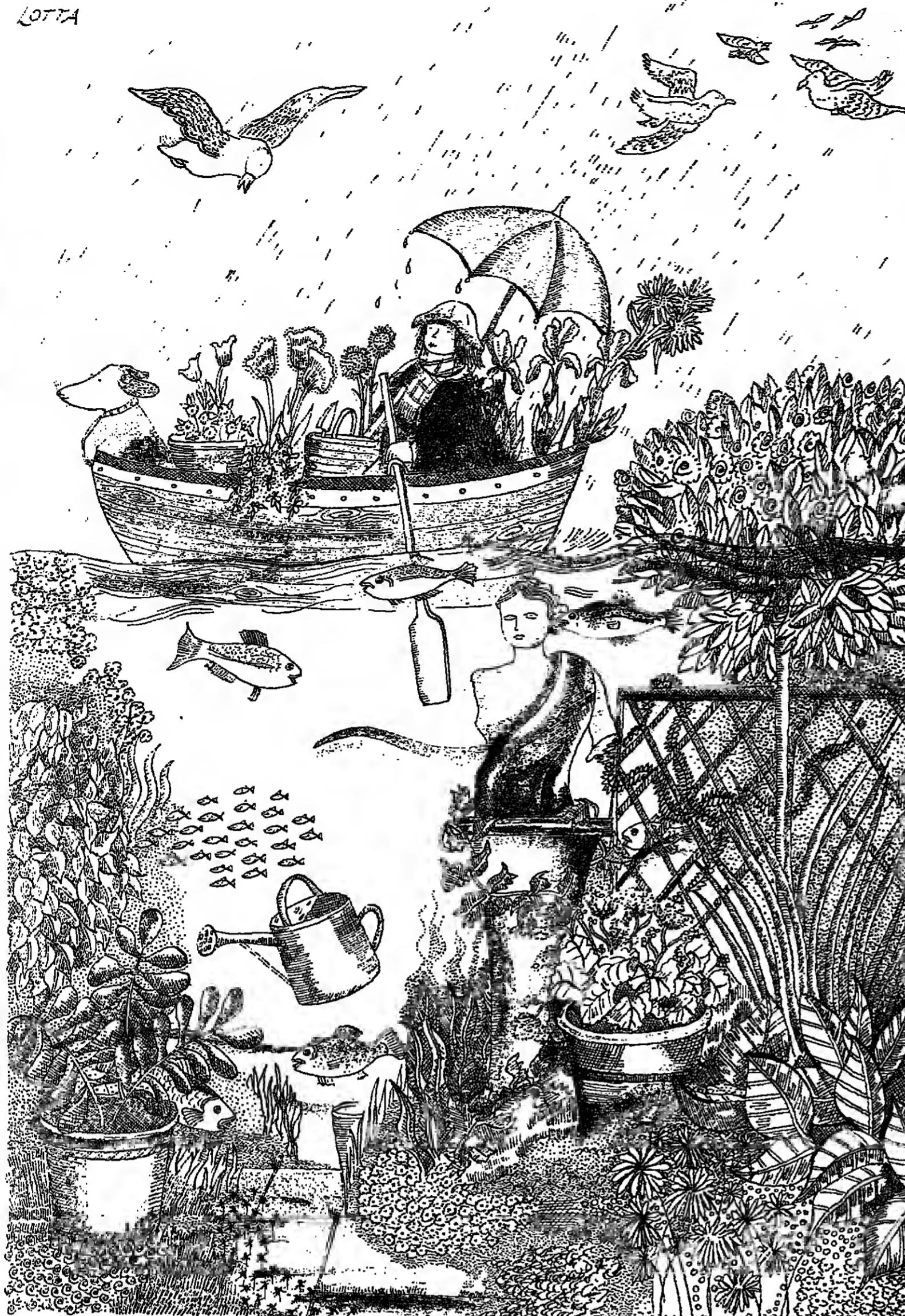
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Grow with the flow

Floods needn't be a disaster - with a little help, your plants should be strong enough to recover, says Ursula Buchan

The Nene valley in Northamptonshire is a very pleasant spot, I know, because I live there. However, it became rapidly less pleasant on Maundy Thursday, when continuous heavy rain caused the river and its tributaries to rise, and there was widespread flooding.

We were lucky; we escaped the depressing spectacle of our furniture floating freely in filthy water; but the back garden was less fortunate. For several days, flower beds and lawn were under 1m of water, which had cascaded off the neighbouring fields. On a clay soil such as ours, water was slow to drain from the surface, even after the rain eased. Although only a comparatively small number of gardeners will have been flooded like ours, most of those on heavy soils must still be sodden, even waterlogged, and may well have been roundly cursed by their owners.

Gardeners agree about little, as a rule, but they are at one in their belief that prolonged waterlogging harms most plants, except of course "aquatic" and "bog plants". Water saturation prevents the fragile root hairs from extracting oxygen from the soil which surrounds them. Oxygen is needed to produce energy, so the whole plant depends on it for healthy growth, even survival. Roots die without oxygen, and anaerobic conditions also favour nasty, soil-borne fungal diseases, such as phytophthora.

Flooding, or even just a bout of heavy rain, causes the surface of a clay soil to "cap", when it dries out, this hinder rain from entering and so, paradoxically, can lead to drought. What is more, heavy rain washes nutrients out of the topsoil. This is especially true of nitrogen, which is needed at the start of the growing season by green-leaved plants, such as lawn grasses.

The not-so-sweet irony is, that recent droughts have encouraged us gardeners to grow a range of Mediterranean plants, such as cistus and artemisia, which have evolved in well-drained, stony soils and under hot summer suns. It stands to reason that they will not appreciate being stuck in a saturated soil, battered by cold north winds.

Before you are reduced to tears by this dreary catalogue of undesirable consequences, bear in mind that plants are often remarkably resilient, and most should recover their strength as the weather improves and soil temperatures rise. This is certainly the opinion of Guy Barter, senior horticultural adviser at the Royal Horticultural Society's garden at Wisley. He believes that the sensitivity of plants, even "drought lovers", to short-lived waterlogging (which is what this is) is often exaggerated. Spring is, after all, the season when the days are lengthening, plants are in active growth and the soil will warm up quickly - once it stops raining, of course.

His advice to anyone whose garden was flooded is to hose silt and dirt off plants gently, so that the leaves can breathe; prick with a garden fork the topsoil of borders, once they have dried on top, to allow air and water to the roots once more; and row vegetables, if seedlings have been washed away or seed has rotted, when conditions improve. Cloches and horticultural fleece can be used both to protect existing plantings while the nights are still cold, and to warm up the soil before sowing.

As far as the lawn is concerned, Derek Walder, director of the Institute of Groundsmanship, suggests that once any accumulated silt and rubbish has dried, it should be raked or swept off, and then the lawn spiked extensively with a hired spiker (or a garden fork, if the area is small), to a depth of 6in-9in, so that air, light and rain can reach the roots. In two or three weeks, water on a liquid fertiliser such as Phostrogen, which the grasses will absorb quickly.

I hope my plants will survive their dunking. However, should any turn yellow and die, I shall, after a short period of mourning, pull myself together and treat it as a golden opportunity to grow something different.

After digging in some grit to open up the soil a little, I shall plant some of the choice, tall-growing perennial lobelias; together with a few of the many colourful cultivars of *in-sabicea*, and perhaps the imposing, 7ft-tall *Eupatorium purpureum* 'Aropurpureum', a flower much loved by bees and peacock butterflies. Meadowweet (*Filipendula*), trollius, and astilbes will also feature. These are all attractive perennials which are often impossible to place successfully, except in a bog garden, because they require that tricky combination of full exposure to sunshine and constant soil moisture in summer.

This year, for a change, they may just have the conditions that they like. Who said a heavy soil is a curse?

Anna Pavord is on holiday

WEEKEND WORK

Pruning: there is still time to prune buddleias. Aim for a neat, rounded profile, cutting stems back by about 80 per cent - to just above the pairs of new leaves or buds. **Weeds:** if ground elder is a major problem, choose a dry and windless day and spray carefully with Roundup. Small infestations can be dug out by hand, taking care to remove as much root as possible.

Vegetables: sugar snap and mange-tout peas should be sown for late August eating. **Perennials:** overgrown perennials can be split up and replanted - push two forks back to back into the crown, and force the plant apart. Water the divided crown well when planting.

Kirsty Ferguson

GARDENING

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The future is assured for Eton's jolly boatmen

In a world of change, the famous Berkshire school has safeguarded a key tradition, writes Duff Hart-Davis

Jolly boating weather it has not been: the breeze has been more arctic than hay harvest, and with the sun barely visible, nobody needs shade from the trees. Nevertheless, hard by the river Thames a couple of miles west of Windsor there is now taking shape a development that will benefit rowers from all parts of southern England and gladden the hearts of countless Etonian oarsmen to come.

The Eton authorities have talked about digging a lake at Dorney for more than 30 years. A possible site was identified in the Sixties, yet the scheme seemed so colossal and daunting that it was shelved; not until the arrival of the present bursar, Rodger Watson, in 1985, did it start moving towards reality.

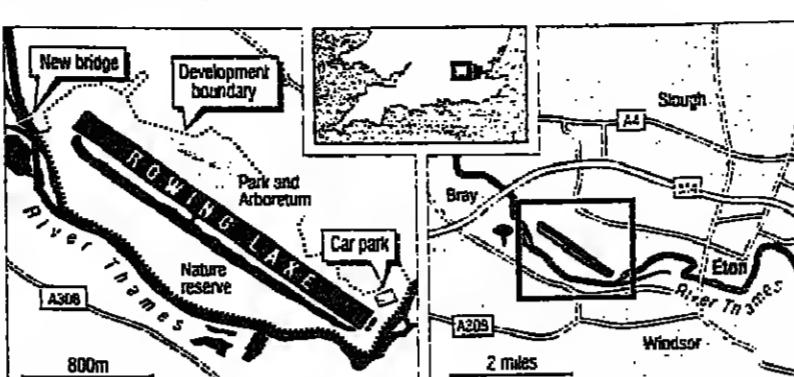
Because he came from a mining background, and had worked for Rio Tinto, Mr. Watson "wasn't scared of really big projects", and it is largely his tenacity that has driven this one through. His brief, in short, has been to create a lake on which boys from the school will be able to row in safety, since their traditional waterway, the Thames, has become intolerably crowded. In summer 6,000 pleasure vessels take to it every month; accidents are common,

and a prize exhibit in the information centre set up to illustrate the lake project is the bow section of the school's third eight, which was chopped off by a cruiser reversing out of the Datchet marina.

Eton has owned the site – a 450-acre stretch of level farmland at Dorney – since the Twenties, and from the start the school realised that the only way to finance the scheme would be through the sale of sand and gravel. But the project ran into fierce opposition from local people, supported by both district and county councils.

The main objections were that invaluable archaeological remains would be destroyed, and that the disturbance created by lorries hauling gravel would be insufferable. Yet Eton disarmed antagonism, and evolved a plan that has already brought benefits to the local community.

Under EC legislation the school was obliged to prepare an environmental statement of its intentions. To minimise the nuisance caused by extraction, Eton agreed to build a new road from the uninhabited western end of the site, and also came up with a radical proposal – that half the gravel should go out by conveyor belt through a tunnel specially dug under the Thames,



**jolly boating weather/And a hay harvest breeze
Blade on the feather/Shade off the trees (Eton Boating Song)**

to a processing plant which already existed on the south side of the river.

Later, one of the contractors produced a similar scheme: that gravel should be shifted by conveyor belt slung under a permanent new footbridge over the river. The idea made a big impact on the planners, as did the school's plans for enhancing the new lake

by planting an arboretum of native trees and creating a separate nature reserve, in which small fields will be broken up by hedges, and farming will be designed to attract wildlife.

When the project went to appeal, and Eton won, locals began to take a positive view. Now many are in favour of what they call "the Dorney lake". Already they have

a new car park close to the shore, a footpath right round the site, and a new bridge coming past. Thousands of trees have been planted, and there can be no doubt that, when everything is complete, the environment will be substantially enhanced.

For the past two summers, the Oxford Archaeological Unit has held camps on the site, and their painstaking removal of topsoil has cast much light on the early history of the Thames valley. Their most spectacular find to date is the oldest bridge ever discovered in Britain – a wooden structure dating from about 1,400BC. By the time the project is completed, the college will have provided more than £1m for archaeological exploration alone.

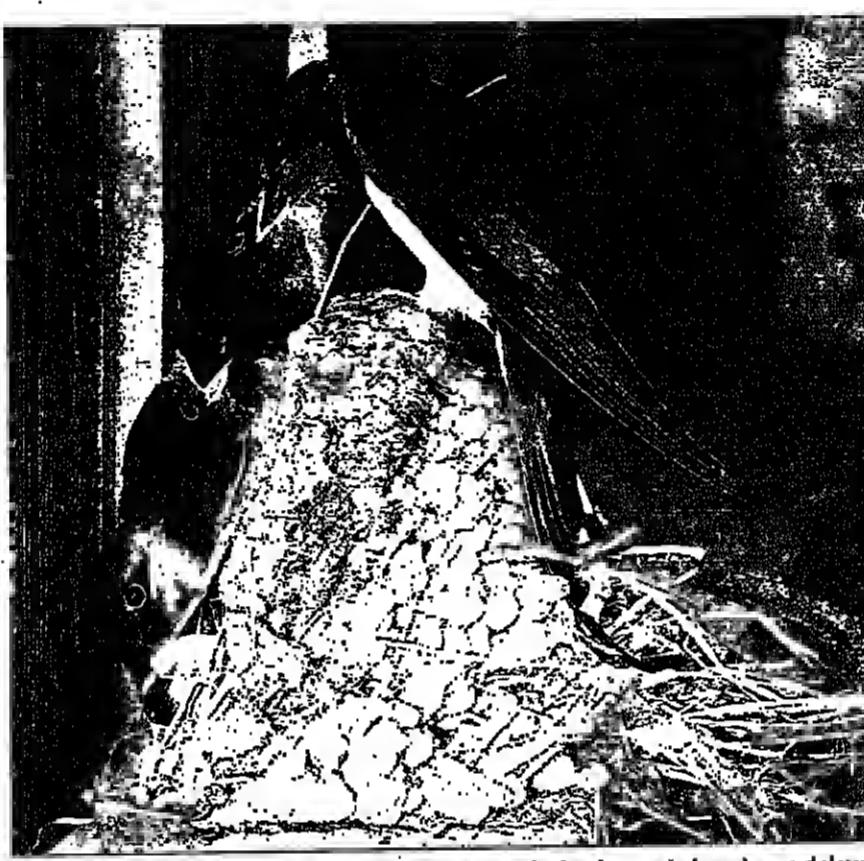
Because the water table is so high, any hole fills the moment it is dug. Bulldozers therefore have to excavate blind, using sonar to achieve the depth of four metres which an international rowing course requires.

Work is now well advanced, but even with excavation in full swing, the site is extraordinarily peaceful. Canada geese have moved in to the open water, and all you can see from the temporary viewing-point is a couple of orange diggers probing away in the middle distance. At the

western end, lorries move sedately off from the processing plant at the rate of about eight an hour, and the conveyor purrs steadily away beneath the footbridge. It is hard to believe that sand and gravel are going out at the rate of 600,000 tons a year, and that in all 4.5 million cubic metres of material will have to be shifted.

The finished course will be 2,000 metres long and eight lanes wide, with another two return lanes alongside, partitioned off by a slender island. Every effort will be made to give the lake a rural appearance; its banks will be scalloped and planted with reeds so that they look like part of the river.

The first 1,000 metres will be ready by 1 April 2000. To begin with, only Eton boys and national oarsmen will use the new facility, but the plan is that within another year 1,200 metres will be open to all comers. In spite of the huge quantities of gravel it is yielding, the scheme will never finance itself. "We've gone in with our eyes open," says Mr Watson. "Recognising that the privilege of having this course will cost Eton £2m. But the school has a long rowing tradition, and the Fellows [the governing body] see the lake as an investment in rowing as a whole, for future generations."



Harbingers of summer: this year the full brunt of the influx of summer birds such as sand martin, swallow and cuckoo (respectively pictured above) was delayed due to the weather

Photographs: Dennis Avner/A. Bailey/Sid Roberts/Ardea London Ltd

Alien invasion

Stand by for the annual influx of feathered summer visitors, writes

Daniel Butler. While the birds are busy courting, this is the perfect time to observe their behaviour

For the next fortnight, Britain will be inundated by the unannounced arrival of millions of aliens. Thanks to the unusual north winds of the last fortnight, the full brunt of the invasion has been delayed somewhat, but over the coming days a vast horde of migrant birds will touch down to spend the northern summer feeding and breeding.

As the legions of warblers, doves, flycatchers, swallows and martins begin nesting, displaying and huting, this is an ideal opportunity for the amateur to brush up on bird-watching skills. Of course, many species had already arrived before Easter's sudden cold snap: turtle-doves, for example, seem to have been particularly early, and Cambridgeshire notched up a county record with a nightingale being heard on 6 April. More usual were the sand martins, chiffchaffs and wheatears who landed

as usual, in March, closely followed by the first willow warblers.

But then came the freezing north and west winds. Although lower temperatures pose little serious concern to most migrants, the headwinds slowed the progress of the invasion force's main squadrons. And for those migrants which had arrived, the cold weather suddenly reduced insect numbers, slowing their recovery from their arduous journey from sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, for most species the conspicuous nest-building, singing and flight displays have yet to begin in earnest.

Adverse weather conditions can only temporarily halt one of nature's annual tides, however, and over the coming days familiar friends are certain to arrive in force. Most visually obvious are probably the swallows, house martins and swifts, but careful listening will soon reveal the presence of garden warblers and spotted flycatchers – not to forget the gloriously obvious cuckoos, of course.

The newcomers, together with all permanent residents, will be intent on reproduction, beginning with courtship and nestbuilding. As they do so, they are at their most preoccupied and least conscious of human beings, giving the perfect opportunity for observation.

The frenzied activity is apparent in even the most built-up of areas, but sitting quietly in any park, wood or piece of open country will reap rewards. The more ambitious may want to take advantage of the season

to spot our 20 breeding raptors, most of which are normally difficult to find.

If you've the chance to make it up to one of our higher moors, keep your eyes peeled for red and black grouse. These birds are normally screened by waist-high heather and scrub, but during the breeding season the males of both species come out into the open. Red grouse stand on vantage points to proclaim their territories and to lure in females, while black grouse assemble at dawn at traditional sites – known as leks – where they dance to impress potential mates.

any miniature percussionist). Look for kingfishers, too, along almost any river bank, as they pair up, calling to each other with reedy whistles. Although, with their flashing metallic blue upper parts and deep orange bellies, they are impossible to mistake, it is usually difficult to pin them down, and most people have never seen this widely-distributed little hunter.

For those from more urban surroundings, there is still plenty to look out for in any garden, park or piece of waste ground. Several species are already busy building nests: blue tits and house sparrows are particularly obvious as they squabble over the best sites. For the slightly more ambitious, this is also the perfect time to work out the difference between the apparently identical marsh and willow tits (the former has little sneeze-like calls, while the willow's are more of a droning buzz).

One of the real thrills of opening your eyes to mating displays over the next couple of months is the chance to spot something unusual. As global warming gets under way, there are new sightings every year, and the British Trust for Ornithology concedes that many rare species may be present in far larger numbers than are officially recognised. The honey buzzard and hobby, for example, are both migrant insect-eaters who are thought to be increasing in numbers – possibly thanks to global warming. Both birds can be difficult to identify, however, with the for-

mer looking almost identical to our resident common buzzard, while the latter's wing-shape is also easily confused with those of its cousins, the peregrine, merlin and kestrel. The bony buzzard can be distinguished by its longer neck and smaller head, while the hobby gives itself away by flying high above gravel pits on sunny days to catch insects lofted by thermals.

Successful tracking of the gradual increase in both species

is thanks largely to the work of helpful amateurs. One word of caution, however: all British birds are protected, and interference during the breeding season can be a serious offence. There are no hard-and-fast rules, but do keep a sensible distance.

Daniel Butler and his partner Bel Crevet are the authors of the recently published 'Urban Dream, Rural Realities' (Simon & Schuster, £16.99).

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What, when, where ...

On 1 May, strange beasts roam the streets of Padstow, on the river Camel in north Cornwall. And young maidens may wish to avoid a close encounter with the fearsome masked Obby Oss who, with his accompanying Teaser and retinue of singers and dancers, tries to envelop young girls in his saileloth skirts. Later on he meets his rival, a more gentle Obby Oss. Some say he represents a dragon being lured into the sea by St Petroc, who settled in Padstow in the 6th century; others that the Obby Oss has pagan origins; 1 May is the festival of Beltane, the first day of summer in the old pagan calendar.

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The soft appeal of Brenda's curves

Sofas that have their origins in sculpture and analysis? Unlikely but true, finds Roger Mills as he meets a designer with a flair for taking things personally

Brenda is swathed entirely in purple velvet. Your eye travels slowly over the undulating landscape of her curves. You'd like to run your hand along her. Once you've seen her, her shape stays in the mind. Rampant sexism? Not a bit of it. Brenda is a sofa.

Brenda is the creation of Richard Joseph Ward, a London furniture designer who, over the last few years, has made unusual sofas his special subject. Naming pieces after the client who commissions them is a Ward trademark - reinforcement, perhaps, of the undeniability personality that they seem to exude. Brenda the sofa was christened after a London collector, Brenda Rosen.

"I'd just come back from living in Paris," Brenda remembers, "and I decided to get rid of all my furniture and start again. I wanted to get away from the boring three-piece suites I'd always had. But when I went round the big stores, everything I saw was so conventional."

"A friend suggested Richard to me, but the first dozen designs he showed me were very classical. Everything I saw I could have got in Harrods. I noticed he had a sheet of rough sketches in the bottom of his portfolio that he kept trying to hide. Just something wild; you won't be interested," he said when I asked to see them, but I insisted. We looked at this scribbled wildness, and I saw the idea for my sofa."

Brenda's encouragement was a turning-point for Ward, and from Brenda the sofa onwards his designs became increasingly individual. Ward's calling card is the dramatic, swooping line. He likens doing a sofa design to designing a boat, and looking at the elegant, racy silhouettes of his pieces you see what he means. Paul Klee used to describe drawing as



"taking a line for a walk". Ward seems to take his in-line skating.

But pure aesthetics are only part of the story. An intriguing feature of the Ward CV is that his original training was not in furniture design but in sculpture. This, however, never seemed quite right. "I always felt that there was something missing. I began to

realise that I wanted to make things that have a function, not just something you look at and don't use. You could build a sofa that looked like a Chieftain tank, but if it didn't fulfil the primary function of being good to sit on, it would be a non-starter."

Practicality is the reason behind one feature of Ward's sofas that is firmly in line

with tradition: his upholstery. Ward uses traditional upholstery methods for the simple reason that they are comfortable, and he uses hardwood frames because they hold upholstery tacks best.

Style and functionality are the obvious demands on the furniture designer. But designing to commission takes Ward into

areas well beyond the drawing-board. "Clients often have much clearer ideas about the fabric they want than what they want their sofa to look like," he points out. "A major part of my job is trying to tease out of people what kind of design will really suit their taste."

Ward has developed his own way over

Brenda on Brenda: Richard Joseph Ward stands by his creation and his client. Photograph: Philip Meech

the mind-reading hurdle. When working on a commission his first step is to visit the client at home. As well as taking in what they are saying they want, and the specific location that the piece is designed for, his antennae are sensitive to other, more subliminal messages. What sort of character does the client seem to be? How do they like to dress? What kind of pictures do they have on the wall? Appropriately enough for a designer of couches, analysing psyches seems to play an important part in the process.

The next stage is the production of what Ward calls "stream of consciousness" sketches: pages of rapidly drawn design ideas that fit the general sense he has of the customer's wishes. Clients can then pick the elements they like from the drawings, and the design begins to take shape. The final stage is to produce a couple of 3-D maquettes, an invaluable aid to anyone not used to visualising the two dimensions of a drawing as a three-dimensional object.

Some buildings seem to have an aura: being in them just feels right - and you may ask whether Ward's furniture enjoys a similar pulling power. It is a test that Brenda the sofa fails through.

"People seem to gravitate towards it," says Brenda's owner. "If you just saw a picture of it you might think 'oooh', but everyone who comes into this room seems to plonk themselves straight down on it." Richard Joseph Ward, it seems, has more than mastered the art of putting bums on sofas.

Richard Joseph Ward will design one-off pieces or produce sofas to existing designs for about £3,000. He can be contacted at his Shoreditch studio on 0171-729 6769.

GAMES

DO NOT PASS GO - OR WHY $G_t = \{G_{t-t}^L \mid G_{t+t}^R\}$

WILLIAM HARTSTON

A unique event took place this week in California with deep implications for the mathematics of games and for the game of Go in particular. To understand what happened, we need to start with a book, *On Numbers and Games*, written in 1975 by the then Cambridge mathematician John Conway, who has long been esteemed as the world's leading authority on the mathematics of games.

In his book, Conway introduced the concept of the "temperature" of a game, which is, roughly speaking, the amount you stand to gain by playing a single move (the theory applies neatly only to games in which making a move cannot make your position worse). Positions in which large gains stand to be made by the player whose turn it is to move are called "hot"; they become "cold" if only small changes in the balance of the position can occur, or even "frozen" if no move makes any difference whatsoever to the position. Conway's "Temperature Theory" envisaged a method of cooling games down. The formula in the headline above comes from his recipe for a cooled version G_t of game G.

Last Tuesday, Elwyn Berlekamp, professor of mathematics at Berkeley, put the theory to practical use involving the game of Go. For those unfamiliar

with this ancient oriental game, all you need to know is that it is played on a 19-by-19 board by two players, who alternately place black and white stones on the playing surface. Groups of enemy stones may be captured by surrounding them, and very simple rules determine whether a group of stones lives or dies. The final result of the game is determined by the number of squares on the board occupied or surrounded by each player.

In recent years, computer programmers have been increasingly interested in the game of Go but have been frustrated by an inability to place numerical values on a position in a useful way. Part of the trouble has been the top Japanese players' habit of talking in vague terms about "shape" rather than giving programmers any concrete analytical concepts they can get their teeth into.

Berlekamp had the idea of getting round this problem by applying Conway's cooling algorithm. The result was a game of "environmental Go" between two former Chinese professionals, Rui Naiwei, a former world women's champion, and her husband Jiang Zhilu - both now resident in the US. The game involved a traditional Go board and stones surrounded by 40 tokens with values marked

on them from 20 down to $1/2$ in half-point increments. On each move a player could either make a move on the Go board or take the highest remaining token. So, if you think the value of the first move is more than 20 points, you play a move; if not, you take the 20-point token.

Play began with tokens being grabbed, but a divergence of opinion clearly showed when Rui started placing stones on the board, while Jiang continued accumulating tokens. Never has a game of Go been conducted in a manner that gave such precise information about the players' valuation of their moves, nor have the players themselves ever had to make such quantitative judgements.

At the end, the final scores, calculated as a sum of squares and tokens, showed that Rui, playing White, had won by $2\frac{1}{2}$ points, though the players, misunderstanding one aspect of the scoring rules, thought that Jiang had won by half a point. But everyone - Go players and mathematicians alike - thought it had been a splendid game.

Information on Go may be found on the web at: <http://www.brigo.demon.co.uk> or from the British Go Association on 01600-712934.

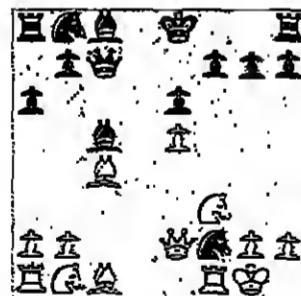
CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

In the 19th century, chess writers liked to pretend that a game could be won through creativity alone. Out of a balanced position, one player would, by sheer force of intellect, conjure some magnificent ideas that forced victory. The first world champion, Wilhelm Steinitz, pouted cold realism on that romantic viewpoint by pointing out that you cannot lose a game without making a mistake.

The true creative art of winning lies in the ability to manufacture opportunities for your opponent to go wrong. In most decisive games, however, you still have the feeling that the result owed more to the loser's errors than the winner's brilliance.

Today's game, from the recent New York Open, is a real battle of ideas. White's 6.Qe2, 7.dxc5 and 8.e4 in the opening is an attempt to get the game out of traditional Queen's Gambit accepted lines and seize an initiative with a quick push of the e-pawn. Black's 8...Qe7 challenges White to play 9.e5, which allows the little combination with 9...Ngs4 and 10...Nxf2 (see diagram). After 11.Rxf2 Bxf2+ 12.Kxf2 b5 Black will win one of the white bishops.

Lpuyan must have been prepared for this, because it is not a new idea, and his 11.b4 was probably the result of good homework. Black should probably have settled for



11...Bb7 in reply, when 12.Nbd2 gives White a good lead in development for his pawns. Dlugy's attempt to grab 11...Nh3+ and 12...Nc2+ allowed a splendid sacrificial attack.

13.Nc4 threatened a check on d6 and forced the black king to castle, when 16.Nf6+ increased White's investment to a whole rook. After that, however, the attack was irresistible. 20...Qxe4 would have lost to 21.Bd6+ Ke8 22.Qg8+, and at the end 23...Qb6 24.Rd1 leaves Black helpless against the threat of Ng4.

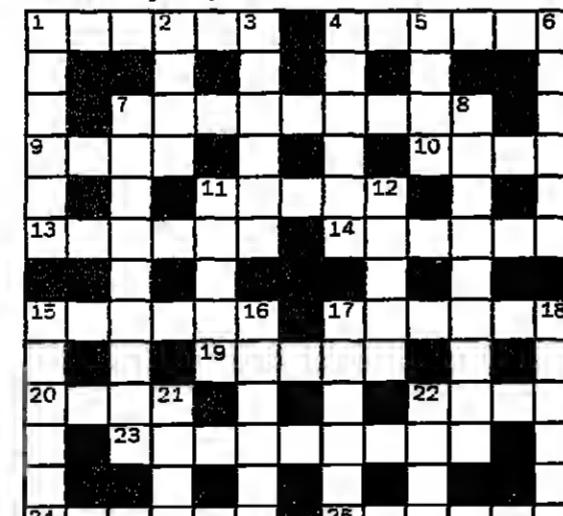
White: Smbat Lpuyan

Black: Maxim Dlugy

1 d4 d5 13 Rxf2 Bxf2
2 c4 dxc4 14 Nbd2 Bb7
3 e3 e6 15 Nc4 0-0
4 Bxc4 Nf6 16 Nf6+ gxf6
5 Nf3 c5 17 cxf6 Nd7
6 Qe2 a6 18 Qd2 Rd8
7 dxc5 Bxc5 19 Qg5+ Kf8
8 e4 Qc7 20 Bf4 Qe6
9 e5 Ng4 21 Rdi Nf6
10 0-0 Nxf2 22 Rxd8+ Ke7
11 b4 Nh3+ 23 Nc5 resigns
12 Kh1 Nf2+

CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3594 Saturday 25 April



ACROSS

1 Gathered (6) 1 Married woman (6)
4 Each (6) 2 Unharmed (4)
7 Consequences (9) 3 Make more profound (6)
9 Anger (4) 4 Look up to (6)
10 Seep (4) 5 Enthusiastic about (4)
11 River crossing etc (5) 6 Result (6)
13 Early invader (5) 7 Make worse (9)
14 Young bird (6) 8 Flower (9)
15 Look into again (6) 11 Destined (5)
17 Part of flower (6) 12 Stories (5)
19 Sussex hills (5) 15 Modern (6)
20 Quote (4) 16 Acustomed (6)
22 PC screen symbol (4) 17 At all events (6)
23 Fortification (9) 18 Deliver (6)
24 Sunburnt (6) 21 Merit (4)
25 Over there (6) 22 Metal (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Cosy, 3 Labourer (Cause celebre), 9 Bingo, 10 Inspire, 11 Ann, 13 Libertine, 14 Waters, 16 Repair, 18 Dirt-track, 20 Dab, 22 Willing, 23 Speed, 25 Royalist, 26 Tree, DOWN: 1 Cobra, 3 Sun, 4 Akimbo, 5 Observe, 6 Reprimand, 7 Red deer, 8 Cell, 12 Naturally, 14 Widower, 15 Retrial, 17 Haggis, 19 Kiss, 21 Badge, 24 Ear.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

North-South game; dealer South

North
♦A 10 4 3
♥J 8 5 2
♦A K
♦A 10 5

West
♦7 6 2
♥Q 10 9 6
♦10 9 5 4
♦4 3

East
♦5
♥K 3
♦J 8 2
♦K Q 9 8 7 2

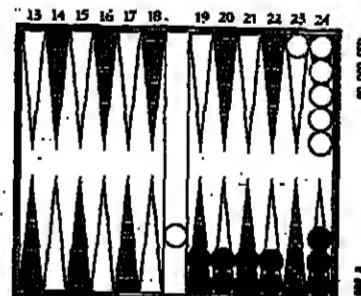
South
♦3
♥6 4 3
♦A 9 8 5 3
♦A Q 7 4

"I missed a beautiful line of play there!" South exclaimed after this deal. "But you made it, didn't you?" his puzzled partner asked. "Oh yes, but as the cards lie, the alternative was much more elegant." There was no time for him to expound before the next hand was dealt, and I wondered if, like Fermat's reputed proof of his Last Theorem, it might be lost for ever. See if you can spot the other line in Six Spades, but here is the play in fact went:

South ended in Six Spades after East had made a high pre-emptive bid in clubs and West led ♦A. After winning with dummy's ace, declarer ruffed a club in hand and drew two rounds of trumps, finding them 3-1. There was no chance now of a complete elimination, but, after cashing ♦A.K, South ruffed dummy's last club, took ♦Q, and ruffed his losing diamond. Then he played the ace and another heart. It did not matter whether East unblocked or not; he had either to concede a ruff and discard, or the defenders were reduced to only one heart trick. It was, for most people, elegant enough - a successful partial elimination play.

It took me some time to find the alternative, but try this: Without touching diamonds, declarer ruffs out the clubs (using a trump for an entry) and cashes the remaining trumps, discarding ♦4 from hand. This leaves dummy with ♦J, 8, 5, 2, ♦A, K and South with ♦A, 7, ♦Q, 7, 6, 2 while West has to find a discard from ♦Q, 10, 9, 6, 10, 9, 5, 4. If he throws a diamond, South has four tricks in the suit; if he parts with a heart, then a heart to South's seven establishes dummy. The neat thing about this variation is that South does not even need ♦Q! It would not be so good if East held, say, ♦K, 10, so perhaps South's real-life play was better.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



One of the main ways that people develop their skill at a game is to study its history and previous matches between good players. Chess and bridge have flourished not only because they are good games in themselves but also because chess games and bridge hands have been so well documented over the years.

By way of contrast, the first backgammon match to be recorded was only in 1977. Many of the significant improvements in playing strength over the last 20 years can be directly attributed to the fact that we can now study a wealth of master games. Backgammon is played at too fast a pace for players to record their own moves but third parties can easily do so. Alternatively the moves of most tournament finals can be transcribed from video recordings. I shall be going through an entire game in this column in a few weeks' time.

Notation was also a problem in the early days, but the notation I use is now standard - you will find the odd exception but they are becoming rarer. Finally, there is the problem of diagrammatic representation. In the early days of this column I used some software written for me by a colleague. About 18 months ago I switched to using the Monte Carlo true type font which anyone with a PC running under Windows can use. The font costs only \$32 (including airmail postage). It has recently been upgraded so that it can now show men that have been borne off the board.

As an example, the position above is taken from one of my recent matches. It is double match point and Black has a 53 to play. How would you play it: 6/1, 6/3 or 5/0, 5/2? We shall discuss this position next week. The Monte Carlo Font can be obtained from Steve Smith, Alpine Electronics, 526 West 7th Street, Powell, WY, 83435, USA.

IT'S
OF THE

A taste of... garlic

Nikki Spencer samples the riches of the Isle of Wight

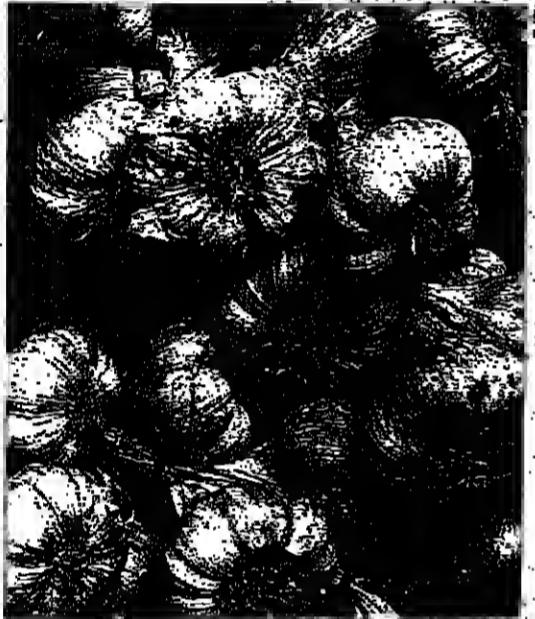
Think of garlic, and the Mediterranean may come to mind, but you have only to take a short ferry ride across the Solent to find the pungent bulb being grown commercially right here in Britain. Garlic has become so important to the Isle of Wight that in August, when the harvest is over, the village of Newchurch regularly hosts a two-day garlic festival. Here you can sample garlic in every conceivable form, including ice-cream and liquourics.

The bulb was first cultivated on the island about 20 years ago, when Colin Boswell, a commercial grower, decided to try something different from the usual tomatoes and sweetcorn. He experimented with a variety of French mountain garlic, and he hasn't looked back.

Colin, who supplies many large supermarkets, puts his success down to the fact that the island boasts the sunniest place in Britain - Sandown. This is particularly important when it comes to drying the garlic once it has been lifted from the soil.

A field of garlic looks a bit like a field of leeks (the word "garlic" means "spear leek"). The bulbs have to be pulled carefully from the ground by hand. "It's hard labour," says Colin. "We tend to use school kids between 14 and 18; because they're pretty fit." The bulbs are left to dry in the sun for a few days; if the weather isn't good they are put into glasshouses and dried with artificial dryers.

"When you touch the garlic, the outer leaves should just snap and fall off, and you are left with a glistening white bulb underneath," says Colin, who claims that he never tires of the stuff. "I smell it every day but still salivate when I do."



Garlic trails
• The garlic festival takes place in Newchurch on the Isle of Wight on 22 and 23 August. As well as the garlic marquee, which has all kinds of garlic-flavoured food and drink, there will be a variety of entertainments, including escapologists, pig trials and Wild West shows. More details from Island Partners (01983 853411).

• If you want to sample garlic shampoo (unscented), garlic bubblegum and more, the Garlic Information Service (a free helpline for garlic-lovers) runs a mail-order service. Call 01424 892440.

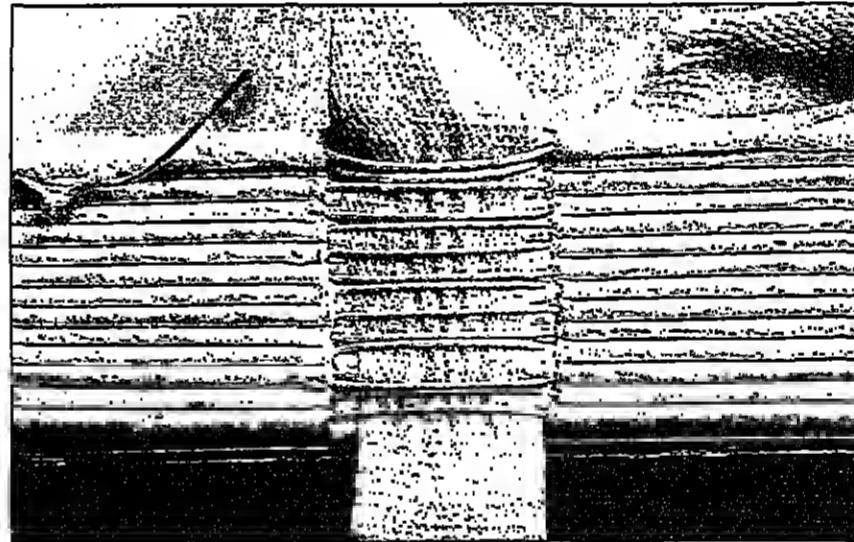
• Those who love garlic but hate peeling it can get someone else to do it for them. You can now buy pots of fresh, ready-peeled garlic in branches of Sainsbury; it will also soon be available at Tesco. • If ordinary garlic isn't strong enough for you, try wild garlic. This increasingly trendy ingredient is currently appearing on restaurant menus. If you know what you're looking for, between now and May you can pick your own in woodlands all over the country, or you can buy it from wild food specialists such as Taste of the Wild, London Stone Business Centre, Broughton Street, London SW8 10171-498 5654.



Depressed as hell: traditional bookbinding lives on at West Dean College
Photograph: Andrew Hasson

A pressing engagement

Only Luddites need apply ... Sally Staples went on a course caught in a time warp



I was able to achieve on day one. I'm a complete beginner, and after a single day I could produce a book. Now I'm doing another one for my mother, and I've bought along some tattered copies of Gregg's shorthand textbooks to repair."

To make the pages for the ootobook, students take A1 sheets of paper, cut them in half and then fold each half into quarters, giving eight-page sections. The next stage is to bind the sections together with tape, which will involve some sewing with a special needle and waxed thread.

Once the sections have been pressed in a press, students calculate where the tapes should be placed and small indentation marks are made on the spines of the pages. While they are still in the press, a small hacksaw is used to make tiny notches in the paper, where tapes will fit.

The pressed pages are then placed on a small wooden frame, and the tapes secured at the bottom. The holes in the paper act as a guide for the needle, and each section is sewn firmly to the spine. The paper is then pressed a second time.

The next stage involves sticking end-papers on to either end of the sewn sections. Then a kind of net material called a "mull" is fixed on to the spine with water-soluble glue and covered with two layers of brown paper. The mull will later be tucked inside the hard cover, securing the pages into the case.

Alan Bryant, a semi-retired finance director from Windsor, was eager to make the case for his book, and had measured out two sheets of card and a single strip for the spine. Next he cut a sheet of buckram (costing around £6 a metre, and available from the college shop) which would be glued on to the card to form the cover.

Tiling the cover can be a tricky business. A selection of tools, each with one letter of the alphabet, are left to heat on a hot plate. Students make a dummy of the words they want and then line up the rough copy on the spine to act as a guide. A piece of gold foil is inserted between the copy and the spine, and when the tools are hot enough the words can be printed. The amount of pressure needed to achieve clear lettering must be learnt through practice.

Meanwhile, Elwyn Walker, an area pub manager, had brought along a selection of old books whose pages needed trimming. He had been using an ancient wooden plough press to smooth down all the rough edges by moving a blade back and forth over the book, held in position by a vice. "It's so satisfying working like this," he said. "Much better than using a guillotine."

The five-day residential course, at West Dean College, near Chichester in East Sussex (01243 811301), costs from £573; for non-residential students the cost is from £244.

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Nigel was sensible for years but then he turned into a Swiss Alp



MIKE
ROWBOTTOM
ON
MARATHON
MADNESS

I WONDER how many Telebubbles will be running in tomorrow's Flora London Marathon? Officially there are two - both, for the record, Laa-Laa. But I fancy there will be a late run on pronged headgear.

Twenty minutes after the mass of conventionally-clad runners have left their starting point in Charlton Way, the road will be thronged with all manner of strange and wondrous back-markers - what the official guide refers to as the "novelty and fancy dress exponents". Think of the bat in Star Wars. Double it. You're getting there.

Among the attractions this time round are Noddy, Fred Flintstone, Elvis Presley - all the usual suspects, in fact. Enterprisingly, one entrant is coming

as Posh Spice and David Beckham. This will involve wearing a Manchester United shirt on his right side, and a little black Gucci dress on his left. There only remains the problem of whether to smile or not - a lopsided grin is probably the best solution here. Animals, of course, will also be widely represented. There will be runners in the guise of gorillas - as it were - camels, emus, hedgehogs, bears, rhinoceroses...

Seriously. What is going on here? What is it that persuades otherwise sensible people to become party animals?

To gain some insight into the mind of the marathon novelty I asked Nigel Braggins, who last year ran as the Matterhorn. This - for the benefit of those

who haven't tried it before - entailed wearing a nine-foot high papier mache representation of the mountain in question.

Fun for a party, perhaps, but these people have to run 26 miles and 385 yards, haven't they? I mean, it's like starting the day with a fixed grin and grinning all day until you go to bed.

"I was able to run in a reasonably normal style last year," Braggins said. Was that, I wondered, normal style given that he was the Matterhorn, or simply normal normal? He clarified the matter. "I was lucky it was a still day. If the wind had blown, I would probably have taken off."

What concerns me about Nigel Braggins is that he hasn't always been like this. Here is a family man with two children

and a wife in Hertford and a graphic design business in the West End, who runs six London Marathons, sensibly clothed, raising money for the Action Research charity. Excellent. Fine. But then what happens? He turns into a Swiss Alp.

"I used to think the people who dressed up to run were crazy," he said. "My attitude was that it was difficult enough running a marathon as it was, so why on earth were these people wearing gorilla outfits?"

"But whatever it was in my brain that told me that this was crazy I must have lost as I crossed the finish line one year."

Once that safety feature had disappeared, Braggins was lost to the world of the sensible. Six months after running as

the Matterhorn, he completed his fund-raising by climbing it.

Tomorrow he will be the fine standing inside a specially-adapted kayak - that is, a kayak with a hole in it. And yes, later this year he will travel to Nepal to kayak through the white water hell that is the River Seti. Just in case you worry, he has fixed rubber bumpers to his kayak to avoid injuring other runners.

Terry Cole doesn't make any bones about the fact that he has taken leave of his senses. He revels in it. After juggling with a ball in it. And yes, later this year he will travel to Nepal to kayak through the white water hell that is the River Seti. Just in case you worry, he has fixed rubber bumpers to his kayak to avoid injuring other runners.

"I would describe myself as a circus stuntman who breaks world records," said this 39-year-old from Grants Hill. "I do a lot of shows in clubs with samurai swords. I put an apple on someone's head and cut it in half without touching a hair on their head."

"Did he get many volunteers for this trick? I wondered. "No," he said.

Terry has been a bit down recently after his failed attempt to break the world crawling record at a track in Walthamstow. "I was nowhere near my target," he said. "Then it started to rain."

But come wind or rain tomorrow, Terry will be out there, in a neon-bright pink top hat and tails. That's not all, of course. He is tap dancing the whole way. And at every mile marker, he will pause to complete one hundred one-arm press-ups. So that's 2,600 one-armed press-ups. Hang on. That might beat his own world record of 2,346. No. He did that in an hour. On broken glass. As you were.

Marathon prepares for a Mac attack

By Mike Rowbottom
Athletics Correspondent

CELEBRATIONS could be loud and long in the numerous Irish pubs along the route of tomorrow's London Marathon. All the indications are that one big Mac, the 1996 winner and last year's runner up Liz McColgan, is about to be eclipsed by another - Catherine McKiernan.

Such has been the form of this farmer's daughter from County Cavan that she goes into the women's race as clear favourite despite the presence of the redoubtable McColgan, the defending champion, Joyce Chepacha of Kenya, and Marian Sutton, twice winner of the Chicago marathon and confident of improving on her London best of sixth place.

McColgan should never be underestimated - and her performance two weeks ago in the Balmoral Challenge race, where she produced the second fastest time she has ever recorded over five miles, indicates that she has speed to go with her undoubted strength.

It the weather continues unsettled tomorrow morning - and the forecasts speak of the possibility of showers - Scotland's representative is hardly likely to be put off. But nor will McKiernan, who has proved with her performances in the World Cross Country Championships, with four successive silver medals, that she relishes tough conditions.

McKiernan's winning time in last September's Berlin Marathon - 2hr 23min 44sec - was the fastest ever by a woman debutant. Since then, her preparations have gone smoothly and although she has been careful not to put any pressure on herself with rash predictions, her appearance in London earlier this week gave a new lease of life to the phrase "quietly confident".

McKiernan will have a huge amount of support. The travelling group of friends and relatives who have always been there to cheer her on during the cross country campaigns will be out in force again.

Yesterday's statement by the organisers that McKiernan had wanted the pacemakers to

reach the halfway point in a relatively sensible time of around 72 minutes indicated that she will be approaching her task with circumspection. And perhaps cutting loose over the final couple of miles when she considers the time to be right.

The men's race is a far more complex affair. The recent form of the defending champion, Antonio Pinto of Portugal, has been as impressive as that of McKiernan. But his hopes of retaining the title and equalising Dionicio Ceron's record of three London wins will be tempered by the knowledge that he faces a field that is as strong as any assembled in the event's 16-year history.

Josia Thugwane, South Africa's first black Olympic champion, has built on his momentous achievement in the Atlanta Olympics. Last December he lowered his national record to 2hr 07min 28sec in winning at Fukuoka.

Then there is the world champion, Abel Anton of Spain, whose fourth place behind Thugwane in Fukuoka brought to an end a sequence of three marathon victories after moving up the distances.

Add to that the presence of Steve Monaghetti, world bronze medallist last year at the age of 34 and one of the most experienced marathon runners around, Elijah Lagat of Kenya, who won last September's Berlin event in 2hr 07min 41sec, and Pinto's task appears even greater.

The British challenge will come from Paul Evans, third here in 1996, and Jon Brown, who has the attitude and ability to make a big name for himself at the event, if not tomorrow then soon.

The main impact of any foul weather could fall upon Lagat and Thugwane, neither of whom will relish rain. Thugwane will be hoping for a element outing, if only for the sake of his knees.

The event has already managed to seize one record before it gets underway. A record number of 41,251 entries have been accepted from more than 94,000 applicants. The event's prestige is unlikely to be anything other than enhanced come noon tomorrow.

My chance to run free from the prison of the swimming pool

LAST SUMMER, I sprinted from the tube to catch the last train to Tunbridge Wells from London Bridge. Collapsing in a heap with my lungs burning, I knew I had to start training again. One year after retiring from international swimming had reduced me to this. A quivering, out-of-shape, ex-athlete.

I had no desire to return to the pool and a friend insisted I join him in the London Marathon. A national carnival, the triumph of mind over body, joining a tradition dating back to 490 BC when Pheidippides ran to announce the Greek

victory over the Persians, and then dropped dead. Who could resist?

As an Olympic swimmer, I know the secrets of the elite. I would apply the same knowledge of nutrition, mental preparation and planning to my running. I had four months left. The challenge was on.

The pursuit of a clearly defined goal has become second nature to me. So, too, has aiming high. Running a marathon puts you in a minority of millions: running sub-four hours is good, for a non-athlete; so I started out for a sub-three hour marathon.

Fortunately I am also good at reassessing my goals, which became: can do four hours; could do 3:45; just might do 3:30. Run after run was spent calculating split times and pace times in my head. Five miles, then eight miles, then 10 and up to 18 miles, holding eight minutes 15 seconds per mile.

Like each swim, each run started with a 10 minute warm up and finished with at least 20 minutes of stretching. This was not something I forced myself to do, but simply the routines of a normal session. It helps recovery and, crucially, prevents

good pain of training and the bad pain of an injury. Even when I ran with friends, this ignorance made me feel anxious and alone.

Training is as hard as you want it to be and the pain is no different whether running or swimming. In the water, I know exactly what my mind and body can do and what will happen if I keep pushing. But with running, I don't. I can't immediately feel the difference between the

myself of the joy of backing off in the last few miles. The mediocrity of the comfort zone is anathema to the elite, a no-go area littered with guilt and failure. It was an area I eschewed for eight years, but now had the permission to embrace. My training this time was all about consistency and the progression that comes from a willingness to train.

My big concern though is "the wall". The only wall I know is the one at the end of the pool with a timing pad. Most runners hit the wall at around 20 miles, when the energy de-

rived from carbohydrates dries up and the body switches to its fat stores. The theory is that refuelling every five miles will avoid this burn out. Coupled with a technique that sports psychologists call "anchoring" using one thought or image to focus on effortless running, the wall should vanish in a puff of science.

At 20 miles, my anchor will be running at Bewl reservoir in Kent, with the mist rising from the water in the cool morning. Bright sunshine will be filtering through the trees as I take deep lungfuls of

clean air. Running will be an exhilarating celebration of body and soul.

Tomorrow morning I will have set my goals, set the race plan, be fuelled and hydrated. There will be an enormous crowd to cheer us at every step. I know I can go 18 miles. The question to which I am about to find the answer is, what happens next?

●

James Parrack is running for Marie Curie Cancer Care. All donations can be sent to Marie Curie Cancer Care, 47 Dafford Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 3TE.



The London Marathon has motivated Jon Brown to achieve a peak of fitness - 'I have worked for years to become an efficient runner'

Photograph: Peter Jay

Brown on efficiency drive to success

THE waitress arrived with Jon Brown's lunch yesterday, removing the cover with something of a flourish to reveal the marathoner's staple meal of rice dish - pasta.

The man who, for many, represents the future of British

Africa's first black Olympic champion, has built on his momentous achievement in the Atlanta Olympics. Last December he lowered his national record to 2hr 07min 28sec in winning at Fukuoka.

Then there is the world champion, Abel Anton of Spain, whose fourth place behind Thugwane in Fukuoka brought to an end a sequence of three marathon victories after moving up the distances.

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Mike Rowbottom meets the cool, calm and collected runner on whose shoulders rest home hopes of a victory tomorrow

that he managed a time of 2hr 10min 13sec, a more than useful benchmark.

Brown's own thoughts on his British contemporaries became very clear a couple of years ago, when he criticised their lack of commitment after he had secured his 10,000m place for the Olympics by winning the trials.

His views have not changed. "I don't feel other British runners are willing to make the kind of sacrifices I have," he said. "I have worked hard for years to become an efficient runner. Sometimes other run-

ners come up to me and ask for advice, but I feel like I am wasting my time when I try to help them.

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ners come up to me and ask for advice, but I feel like I am wasting my time when I try to help them.

"It's as if they think I have some kind of secret formula for success, and there isn't one. You've got to look at your whole lifestyle to see if it is working efficiently for you. But these guys just go back to their old bad habits."

Brown's preparations for his first marathon, in Chicago last October, were hampered by a persistent hip injury. Despite

that he managed a time of 2hr 10min 13sec, a more than useful benchmark.

The hip injury disappeared in January thanks to a new routine of stretching exercises. But Brown has not exactly gone crazy with the racing since then. Yesterday he was asked when his last competitive race had been. "You tell me," he said laconically. "It was about three months ago."

Did that not represent a problem, the questioner continued? "Not for me," replied the

man, whose public pronouncements tend to make Kenny Dalglish sound like Peter Ustinov.

"I can spend a long time without races," he said later. "because I have total confidence in what I do and I know myself really well. I have trained regularly at altitude since 1993, and I can work out exactly how my performances will transfer when I do down to sea level to race. The key to altitude training is to have patience."

On one recent training trip to Boulder, Colorado, Brown recalls seeing a group of British runners who he felt were missing the point. "They were just going crazy, just destroying themselves," he said. "They were not helping themselves at all - it was almost laughable.

"In athletics, you have got to be totally detached. You can't be constrained by anything, whether it's location, or even emotion."

Brown has always intended to move up to the marathon. "I can run a decent 10,000m," he said, "but if you look at some of the times African runners have been achieving in the last few years, they might as well be Martians."

"In the marathon, the advantage the African runners have are lost after a certain point. You still see top Europeans preparing well and making a big impact on the event."

"Cool detachment is something which appears to come naturally to Brown. But at a deeper level, he is fully engaged with his sport."

"It helps to have a target," he said. "And the London Marathon is such a big target for me that I don't feel I need to do little more."

"I'm in the best shape I've ever been, and I'm really anxious to get out there and see what I can do."

The results could be fascinating, and at odds of 40-1 to win, Brown looks worth a few quid to anyone with a mind to bet on it.

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Seven Sisters ready to go to the ball

A mining village face Llanelli in the biggest rugby game in their history tomorrow. Tim Glover reports.

THERE IS no official bookmaker in Seven Sisters but that doesn't mean that bets aren't wagered. Since beating Gainsborough in the quarter-finals at Maes Dafydd a fortnight ago, the odds on Seven winning the Welsh Cup have fallen from 66-1 to 50-1. By rights they should have risen to 500-1.

Since that historic day, when they became the first junior club to reach the last four, very little has gone right for Seven in their preparations for the most momentous match in their 101-year history - a semi-final against Llanelli at the Gwaelod Neath's ground, tomorrow.

They've lost their captain, Mark Chilcott, with a broken leg and were beaten at home by Pencoed 72-7 in Division Four of the Welsh League. In addition, last week they were knocked out of the semi-finals of the OG Davies Cup, a Neath and District Competition, by Resolven, a club even more microscopic than Seven.

And that's not all. "We're in the middle of a flu epidemic," reported Dai Watts, the club's secretary. Seven is not the sort of place anybody would visit for a holiday. "In terms of the weather we are always two overcoats worse off than Neath," Watts said.

Seven Sisters is one of a string of what were once mining villages at the head of the Dulais River in the valley dividing Swansea and Neath. The village, which has a population of 2,400, is so called because Evan Evans Bevan, a South Wales industrialist, named his mine Seven Sisters to commemorate the fact that he had seven sisters. The last working mine in the area closed in 1989 since when, according to Watts, "The main pastime has been unemployment."

This is a one-horse town, although Dai the Daffodil, and Dai Roberts who coaches the team, makes a living as a florist. There will be no stay at a luxury hotel, no hotline for tickets (it's pay at the gate), no opportunities for agents to exploit. No agent.

Seven Sisters's answer to the call of professionalism was to pay a win bonus of £40. If



Valley of dreams Seven Sisters, whose rugby pitch is surrounded by evidence of the town's past as part of the South Wales mining industry, will make history if they defeat Llanelli in the semi-finals of the Welsh Cup at Neath tomorrow. Team coach Dai Roberts (below), who makes his living as a florist, is hoping his team will blossom under pressure

Photographs: Robert Hallam

they draw or lose the players do not receive a penny. That incentive applies only to the League.

The Cup is different," Watts said. "Even if they win they will only get a couple of points. I haven't a clue what we'll make out of the match. We don't get a share of the gate money. All that goes to the WRU Cup fund, but we'll make a few bob out of it. A lot of people say we should milk the situation but we've got to keep things in perspective. This is a dream for us."

At least the Sisters will be going to the ball in style. Yesterday the whole squad were invited to Debenhams in Swansea town centre to be kitted out in blazers, trousers, shirts and ties. Dead posh.

One man who is supposed to be neutral but who has Seven Sisters at heart is Dennis Gethin, the new secretary of the WRU. "I was fortunate to grow up in Seven Sisters during the Fifties and early Sixties when the team was a power in the West Wales League," Gethin, a useful full-back for Neath

Grammar School and Cambridge University, said. "The memory of those games still burns brightly and I hope that youngsters today will wish to emulate their present heroes as I did all those years ago. There is no doubt that the future well-being of Welsh rugby is in their hands. Those players of yesterday played hard and enjoyed themselves. It would be marvellous, if that spirit of enjoyment could again become a feature of our national game."

As for Llanelli, who began the season by playing the tour-

ing All Blacks, they may appear to be the equivalent of an old hull frog casting a weary eye over a passing insect but, before any prey is demolished, it is customary to observe certain table manners.

Rather than admit that their intention is to thrash Tom Thum to within an inch of his life, they will declare that nothing can be taken for granted and they will treat Seven Sisters with the utmost respect.

Watts isn't fooled. "I think they'll be out to prove that a club like us shouldn't be there.

We are not worried about the opposition. Our aim is to give a good account of ourselves. When all this is over we'll be old news."

Tomorrow the club will have the support of almost the entire village, not to mention the 25-strong Dulais Valley Silver Band. In the history of Seven Sisters, Watts is one of four brothers who played for the club. It is possible that the only person remaining in the village tomorrow will be his mother Olwen. "I don't like violence," she said.



Distracted Bristol a perfect foe for Falcons

By Chris Hewett

NEWCASTLE, the increasingly fidgety leaders of the Allied Dunbar Premiership, could not have picked a better weekend to take on Bristol at Kingston Park. If that assertion sounds peculiar in the extreme - Bristol's abject performance this season suggests there is never a bad time to play them - it is true to say that the fallen giants of West Country rugby will be at their most horizontal tomorrow afternoon.

And do they care? Do they heck. Bristol have had more important things than Newcastle to worry about this week - Robert Jones, Paul Burke, Kevin Mags and Adam Larkin to name but four - and even though none of those influential players will undertake the thankless task of

attempting to inflict a first home defeat on Dean Ryan's outfit, there was an unmistakeable whiff of optimism about the Memorial Ground yesterday.

Jones, still a master craftsman of a scrum-half at 32, finally signed a two-year contract after weeks of "will he, won't he" speculation. Burke and Mags, two Irish internationals, committed themselves on Thursday - Mags rejected an offer from Richmond to stay with his home town club - while Larkin, a 23-year-old Irish-qualified New Zealander of considerable ability agreed fresh terms yesterday.

The news may not leave the entire northern hemisphere open-mouthed in astonishment but for Bristol, the bottom side in Premiership One, it is a step of Neil Armstrong proportions.

Our signing should be an indication to people both inside and outside the club that we believe Bristol can become successful again," said Jones as captain. "I want to be part of the rebuilding and the resolution of contract issues will hopefully put us in a position to attract new players during the summer."

The success of any transfer activity is likely to hinge on the outcome of talks between Rugby Football Union negotiators and representatives of English First Division Rugby, the club's umbrella organisation. Bristol are banking on an expanded 14-team Premiership next season and their decision to tackle Newcastle with only a third of their first-choice side suggests they are keeping their powder dry for the

play-offs they assume will take place at the end of the season.

All of which is of inestimable value to Newcastle. Tony Underwood, Alan Tait, Va'aiga Tuigamala, Nick Popplewell, George Graham, Garath Archer, Pat Lam and the mighty Ryan himself are all knackered, and Rob Andrew, the Falcons' director of rugby, will not decide until shortly before kick-off exactly which foot-soldiers will be asked to crawl out of the field hospital for another 80 minutes in the front line.

Saracens, the other participants in the Premiership decoulement, also have casualties - François Pienaar and Kyran Bracken, no less - and their tussle with Leicester at Welford Road this afternoon

promises to be far less forgiving: not only do the Tigers feel able to ignore Austin Healey, Richard Cockerill and Eric Miller on the basis of pure form, but they have never lost a league or cup match to the Londoners on home soil. "They've fought us to a standstill twice already this season and they are still an amazingly hard side to overcome," admitted Mark Evans, Saracens' director of rugby.

Elsewhere, West Hartlepool and London Scottish have their respective teeth in what amounts to a Premiership Two promotion decider at Brierton Lane this afternoon while in Wales Ebbw Vale go in search of a first cup final place. They take on Newport at Sardis Road, Pontypridd, and start as clear favourites.

THE most remarkable of Donal Lenihan's many rugby achievements was his single-handed transformation of a hybrid collection of "doughnuts" - the name by which the Lions' mid-week side came to be known during the 1989 Australian campaign - into one of the most effective and supportive second-strangs in the history of British Isles touring parties, writes Chris Hewett.

He has now been asked to work a similar miracle with Ireland who, appropriately enough, have been described as the team with a hole in the middle.

Lenihan, capped 52 times as a second row and one of the few Irish forwards to rival Willie McBride's popularity as a player and captain, will manage the national side in South

Africa this summer. He fills the gap left by Pat Whelan, who resigned earlier this week and is currently embroiled in an unsavoury controversy over an alleged fracas with a journalist in a Limerick pub.

However, the more significant move in Dublin yesterday was the appointment of Warren Gatland, the former All Black hooker, as coach for the period up to and including the 2000 Five Nations Championship.

Gatland, a quietly combative 34-year-old from Waikato, replaced Brian Ashton midway through this year's tournament and inspired pugnacious performances against France and England.

"I am honoured to be offered this job, which is a major challenge with next year's World Cup on the horizon," said

Gatland, the latest in a long line of New Zealanders, including Mike Brewer and John Mitchell, who have cut their coaching teeth in Ireland. While his current international record of played three, lost three is almost certain to be worsened by the Springboks this summer, there was never any serious doubt that the national union would offer him a degree of permanency.

Welsh Rugby Union executives are continuing to do everything in their power to block Neil Jenkins' proposed transfer from Pontypridd to Bath. The outside-half has repeatedly expressed his desire to move but a WRU spokesman said yesterday: "Neil has a contract with us until after the World Cup and we would like to see him play his rugby here in Wales."

Reservoir log - bobbing about like a crouton in the North Sea



ANNALISA BARBIERI
ON
FISHING

RESERVOIR fishing has never been my favourite type of fishing. All that deep, still, silent water which harbours monsters. Those dams at one end with their shiny, slippery sides. And locks, with their ink secrets just as bad.

I'm hydrophobic and there I was in a little motor boat on Hanningfield reservoir in Chelmsford, atop 600 acres of water. And I wasn't very happy.

Being a hydrophobic fishing correspondent isn't easy, but most of the time, the fear is well under control - it has to be - and no one is any the wiser. And with rivers, especially big Scottish ones, it's not difficult to forget fear and be distracted by their eye-missing beauty.

Last October, deep-sea fishing in Madeira we were floating on 3,000 feet of water and yet I was so at ease I had to be

dragged off the boat at the end of the day.

Reservoirs aren't like that. They're like gigantic soup bowls, with teeny boats bobbing around like croutons, in an Alice in Wonderland spooky perspective kind of way. When the wind is soft, the stillness is terrifying. Little boat, lots of water, rod in hand with line going into all that water, and relax in (one hopes) the sun.

This is a very important regime for me, as I have to acclimatise to the realisation that, here I am again doing something that terrifies me.

After half an hour of getting used to the boat, surreptitiously checking for holes, looking for shark fins and Nessie type bumps in the water, I start to like it and can think about flicking flies in the water.

My fishing buddy, Pete, can rarely get out of the car park before he starts casting. That

afternoon, we were to catch just two fishies, totalling two kilos. The abbot-fishermen seemed to have fished the waters dry.

Fishing a reservoir takes particular, and very scientific preparation. First you take the boat out to a good looking piece of water, then you drop anchor, then you lie back and relax in (one hopes) the sun.

It's not just about fishing. I retorted, "it's about observing, I am tuning in to the fish's psyche and I have to do this with my eyes closed."

Five minutes passed. "Fish," he continued, "you're the fishing correspondent, not the snoozing correspondent."

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These were the flies that proved to be so magic at a Scottish trout pond in February and

I am starting to think them a hit good. The Viva with marabou wings is a souped up version of a normal Viva - I call it a turbo Viva - because it has the black chenille body, silver wire rim and fluorescent green tag (tail) of a normal Viva but with "spoilers", in this case a plume of black marabou.

As he played it in, he told me to net it. I have doing this because it means leaning out of the boat, and I hadn't had my half hour of getting used to the water just yet. Plus the net handle was stuck which meant I had to lean out all the more.

Then it started raining so violently it made the reservoir choppy, and it felt like we were in the North Sea. I was by now very unhappy indeed, cussing in two European languages and considering resigning my position in shame.

But the fish was netted, a glorious shiny rainbow trout that must have been about three pounds. The rain stopped and a real rainbow in the sky came out.

Going under the boat (even though they are not meant to like doing that) and diving so violently the sugar shock off my pastry. But perhaps the sturdy Hardy Sovereign, really meant for sea trout, subdued him too quickly because after only five or so minutes, the fish gave up and was netted and prieded. I ate him that evening with mash.

As you read this I'll be at Rutland Water, England's biggest reservoir with 3,300 stocking acres of searay still water. For those of you who haven't yet, don't forget to renew your rod licences which run out at the end of March and are pink this year. Nice. And the biggest fishing news of the year so far is that House of Lords have just bought Farlow's of Pall Mall.

Gosden warns against ignoring Maktoum signal

IT WAS only a generation ago that the Maktoum family, now synonymous with absurd opulence, inhabited the Dubai desert. In just a few weeks time, their actions may send British racing on the same journey in reverse.

It is now believed that if some positive signal is not transmitted when £29m of Levy prize-money is dispersed in June the Channel ports will be gridlocked not by French trucks but by horseboxes transporting Arab horses out of Britain.

After more than 20 years of ownership in this land, the Maktoums' acceptance of Britain's stubbornly poor levels of reward is at an end. "I think they feel there has been a presumption about British racing towards them," John Gosden, Sheikh Mohammed's main trainer, says. "That Greenwich Mean Time runs right up the middle of Newmarket High Street and the straight mile at Ascot that this is the centre of the world."

"The Maktoums are certainly not of that view. The idea that they need to come here because we are the place to race is no longer held by them. They very much enjoy the racing here, they like the different courses, but that sentimental side does not outweigh the fact that the world is a bigger stage and if Britain cannot compete on that stage financially they will, unfortunately, be forced to move their assets elsewhere."

"They will make their decision with international mind. Their horses - which are commodities - will be placed in the best country from a financial point of view even if it does not give them as much fulfilment."

"There is a great sense that if things don't change then they will be left with no choice. But at least they've had the decency to give everyone some subtle warnings through the Nineties and then stronger warnings recently. If they are not needed very soon we will deserve what we get."

Sheikh Mohammed's principal trainer tells Richard Edmondson why he believes that Dubai's rulers are prepared to strike camp

For many years the current mood of dissatisfaction between the four brothers and British racing was unthinkable. The Maktoums enjoyed the variety and rich tradition of the sport of kings and considered ownership in these islands almost as historical gratitude. When Britain expansionism reached the Persian Gulf in the late 19th century, Dubai became a protectorate of visitors who kept the Turks and other acquisitive neighbours at bay. This influence waned only at the beginning of the 1970s, the decade after liquid gold started spouting from the Emirates soil.

By the early 1990s, however, the Maktoums clearly felt the debt had been repaid in full. Their great herds of horses dominated the landscape, though they were scratching round for little, more than pocket money in prizes.

Sheikh Mohammed first voiced the family's disapproval of the status quo in an edition of *Panorama* in 1991. Sheikh Hamdan followed that with similar observations in the *Gulf News* that were relayed to Britain, and then Sheikh Maktoum the eldest sibling, again produced the family line in a Gimcrack speech. Sheikh Mohammed's further use of that forum in December and recent announcement of his Godolphin operation's move to France are evidence that the process is speeding up to an imminent climax.

"What has happened is a purely logical progression," Gosden says. "You're not going to see any historians, but there will be a continuous rationalisation of interests in Britain."

"They have heard for a long time that prize-money would get better but it just staggers along. They had hoped changes would

siggest moment was when Lammtarra, who had won the Derby and just about everything else in 1995, was sold to the Japanese for £30m. Until then Sheikh Mohammed had been considered purely a purchaser of horses.

"The focus now is very much Dubai and has been so for five years," Gosden says. "Sheikh Mohammed looks at Dubai as having no frontiers and he can race anywhere in the world."

"He's very interested in the globalisation of racing. He's got mares and a stallion in Japan and while he's not allowed to race there he's quietly working at it. That will open up in the end."

"He'll keep his breeding operation, I'm sure, in Ireland and America, and to a degree here, but I wouldn't be surprised to see the stallions start transferring to Ireland for the tax exemptions."

Racing survived before the Maktoums and will do so again, even if the entire caravan leaves Blighty. Fellow owners might well be quite pleased to see them go and the big bookmakers would be ambivalent: they care less about the quality of racing than the quantity.

Group racing would certainly never be the same again though without Hamdan's increasingly complex Arabian names fighting out with his brother's personal maroon and white livery on one side and the Godolphin Royal blue on the other. Such a doomsday may soon be upon us.

"In our wonderfully British way we've just assumed that everyone is just very happy to be around us," Gosden says. "We still think we're the greatest while there are other peoples of the world who are happy to tell us otherwise."

The Maktoums will race here as long as the haemorrhage of ownership can be reduced. That can't be done at a sustainable level at the moment. They can go elsewhere and get a better return."



John Gosden: 'Nothing is forever in life. I'm a big boy and I can ride the punches'

Photograph: Robert Hallam

Headwind to make light of Sandown mud Brooks and Guest leave scene early

By Richard Edmondson

COMPLICATED permutations are always a part of Saturday racing, though this week's atrocious weather ensures it is the races themselves rather than speculation on them that is causing great intricacy.

Leicester and Ripon have already fallen victim to El Nifio, but the tricky stuff occurs at Sandown, where they will stage either four, seven or nine races this afternoon. Or, perhaps, one at all.

The contests most under threat on the mixed card are the two encounters over five furlongs, which have been moved to the bottom of the card. That separate sprint track needs only a little more rainfall to resemble the Everglades.

There is greater expectation

that the three races on the main Flat course will be staged. They include a Classic Trial which 12 months ago launched Benny the Dip and Silver Patriarch to fill the forecast in the Derby. The elements rather than the quality of the field suggest there may be another launching today.

The abandonment of all the Flat races would originally have left just the Whitbread Gold Cup and a novice handicap chase, but the National Hunt representation has been swollen by the transfer of a chase from yesterday's abandoned card at Warwick and a new three-mile novice chase.

The four chases are almost certain to go ahead despite the sight of television weathermen dispersing dark shapes across their maps yesterday evening. The prediction was for a further 10mm of rain to visit Esher overnight, though the exact effect of the weather will not be known until Andrew Cooper, the clerk of the course, conducts his inspection at 7.45am.

Robert Alner supplied the first and second in the Whitbread Gold Cup last year, and,

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Headwind
(Sandown)
NB: St Mellion Fairway
(Sandown 3.30)

before the monsoons came, his sole problem seemed to be composing a victory speech of originality.

Cool Dawn, his Cheltenham Gold Cup winner, gets in here with an extraordinarily kind weight. For example, Go Ballistic, who was half the

four survivors from last weekend's Scottish National at Ayr drop their bags in Surrey, including the remarkable Samlee, who was also third in the Grand National. He is beginning to discover how Hercules felt.

Cariboo Gold, whose first sign of form this season came when runner-up to In Truth in the Kim Muir Chase at the Cheltenham Festival, has attracted

10mm of rain to visit Esher overnight, though the exact effect of the weather will not be known until Andrew Cooper, the clerk of the course, conducts his inspection at 7.45am.

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sign of form this season came

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the Kim Muir Chase at the

Cheltenham Festival, has attracted

support this week, while a rather pleasant consolation winner would be Lively Knight. His jockey, Leighton Aspell, was told by Inspector Knacker on Thursday that he was no longer part of race-fixing enquiries.

Recompense is also due to St Mellion Fairway (next best 3.30). He too was among the few that limped back from the Aintree trenches. He has been given more time to recover and as Samlee and, as he is proven in this marmalade going, could provide the value option.

The preceding novice handicap chase is notable in that all six contestants won the last time they started. Hot Warrior qualifies on a technicality as he refused to race at Ayr last week.

Josh Gifford's HEADWIND (nap 2.50) looked more soundly than a novice when he

won over this terrain last month. It may be difficult to get past him at any stage.

For all Sandown's watery charms, the highlight of the weekend will come in the relatively sparsely populated environs of Longchamp tomorrow afternoon. The Prix Ganay signals the return of a colt who has almost completed his membership form to join the exclusive club inhabited by the likes of Shergar and Nijinsky.

Peintre Celebre was a quite awesome athlete at this Parisian venue in the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe last autumn and there will be great anticipation to see how he has emerged from hibernation. The bulletins from Chantilly suggest he will make a winning reappearance against five rivals tomorrow even if he is chained to the starting stalls.

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Josh Gifford's HEADWIND (nap 2.50) looked more soundly than a novice when he

name with some very unpredictable jumping.

Samlee has had some hard

races, including his third in the

National at Aintree, but will get

round in his own time.

Carole's Crusader: Well

backed this week and could run

a big race at the weights, de-

spite tackling the trip for the

first time. Soft ground is a dis-

advantage, however.

St Mellion Fairway: Jumps

well and stays all day as he

shows when reaching fourth

place in the Grand National,

but just lacks that touch of

class.

Aardwolf: Will be hard pressed to reach the frame.

Cariboo Gold: Has a definite

chance after running well at the

Cheltenham Festival but needs

descent ground.

Tell The Nipper: The sole Irish

raider who had a hard race in

the Irish National at Fairyhouse

on Easter Monday.

Hillwalk: May as well stay at

home.

Winter Belle: I would not want to pay the travelling expenses.

Conclusion: Carole's Crusader

is unproven over this trip but

has suggested that he will get

every yard of it. Cariboo Gold

can also give a good account

based on his Festival form but

CALL IT A DAY may have the

measure of them both. He

loves Sandown and will be

hard to beat if the exertions of

his third in the Irish National

have not taken their toll.

BETTING: 4-5 Headwind, 6-7 Samlee, 8-9 Winter Belle, 9-10 Tell The Nipper.

Richard Guest too appears as

though he will be lost to the sport

in his present capacity following

the jockey's confirmation that his

McMillan wins South Africa recall

Cricket

By Myles Hodgson

ENGLAND intend to utilise the close working relationship between their coach, David Lloyd, and the Pakistan all-rounder, Wasim Akram, in an attempt to glean inside knowledge on the South African party announced yesterday for this summer's tour.

The South Africans named a 17-man party for this summer's tour to England, which comprises a five-test series, a three-match Texaco Trophy series and a triangular tournament against the hosts and the world champions, Sri Lanka.

Although England have detailed video and statistical information to hand about all

their Test opponents, Lloyd is sure to pay an early visit to Old Trafford to discover Wasim's thoughts on South Africa's strengths and weaknesses.

Wasim arrives to take up his post as Lancashire captain this weekend after playing for Pakistan in a triangular tournament against South Africa and Sri Lanka and England are keen to tap into his knowledge.

"David's preparation is always very thorough and I'm sure he'll be going to watch South Africa at the first opportunity," David Graveney, the chairman of selectors, said.

"I'm sure he will also be pooling as much information as possible about them and, with Wasim having played against them recently, I'm sure he will be talking to him as well as many

other people. This summer presents an immense challenge to us because they have shown recently how good they are at the one-day game by annihilating Pakistan and they are very adept in Test cricket.

"It is important we learn the lessons from our time in the West Indies. The basic recipe for winning doesn't change no matter who you are playing and what time of year you play and that is something we have to bear in mind."

The South African squad includes several players already familiar to English audiences. Six of the party – the captain Hansie Cronje, Jacques Kallis, Daryl Cullinan, Brian McMillan, Shaun Pollock and Allan Donald – have all played county cricket.

McMillan is perhaps the biggest surprise in the party, having been dropped this season after disappointing tours to Pakistan and Australia. At 34, the big-hearted all-rounder's international career had seemed over.

Peter Pollock, the South Africans' convenor of selectors, stressed: "Mac had a rough season but is a good player and South Africa still have a vulnerability factor in our batting. He has a good record in England and we have picked him mainly as a batsman and a slip fielder."

Mornanau Hayward, the Eastern Province fast bowler, one of six pace men in the party, is also uncapped player in the squad. The party includes Border's Makhaya Ntini – the first black player to represent South Africa in a Test – and the mixed-race swing bowler, Roger Telearachus from Boland.

But it is the extensive experience of English conditions within the squad which will worry the England selectors most and perhaps give South Africa a slight advantage for the opening Test at Edgbaston on 4 June.

"Their experience of English conditions and pitches has got to be to their advantage," Graveney said.

"Our young players do not get the chance to go and discover what it is like playing in India or West Indies and I'm sure that has to help them."

Jacques Kallis, for instance,

will not be at all fazed at

having to walk out at Lord's because he's experienced playing there already with Middlesex last season and Allan Donald we know all about."

Graveney added: "Most of the players we expected are there and I'm slightly surprised some of the one-day specialists like Steve Elworthy haven't been included, but it is still a very strong squad."

"Donald and Pollock speak for themselves and we know a lot about them, but it will be interesting to see how Paul Adams has developed since we last saw him."

SOUTH AFRICAN SQUAD (10 tour

England, starting 17 May): W J Cronje (captain), G Klassen, A M Becher, G F J Liebenberg, J H Kallis, D J Cullinan, B M McMillan, J N Rhodes, M V Boucher, P S Pollock, L A Donald, L Klaasen, P R Adams, P J Snyman, M Hayward, R Telearachus, M Ntini.

Bold Allenby looking good in Spain

Golf

ROBERT ALLENBY showed

he has put serious injury behind him by taking charge in the second round of the Spanish Open in Barcelona yesterday.

The Australian, who also led the Cannes Open last week, had an eight-under-par 64 – just one stroke off the course record – to move into a three-stroke lead on 14-under-par 130.

The 26-year-old from Melbourne led one of the three first-round leaders, Jay Townsend of America, and in-form Briton, Philip Price, second last week in Cannes.

Another overnight front-runner, Jose Carreras of Spain, his compatriot Miguel Jimenez, Japan's Katsuyoshi Tomori, Frenchman Jean Van de Velde, and England's Mark James, the defending champion, were a further stroke back.

Allenby took eight birdies in his last six holes, for his lead and, after fading badly last week in Cannes, the Australian had reason to believe he could stay in front.

"After slipping up last week, I've been tinkering with my clubs a bit," said Allenby, who captured third place on the European money-list in 1996 when he broke his sternum in a car accident, stalling his career in early 1997.

"I've got the same heads but I've changed the shafts for stiffer ones throughout the bag, apart from my three-wood and L-wedge."

"It obviously worked because I've never had two rounds like this, 66 and 64, in my life, and I had birdie chances at every hole because I hit all 18 greens."

"I missed four putts inside eight feet, either through tipping or just missing the hole, so it could have been even better."

Announcing himself fully fit again, Allenby aims to be in the top two of the European order of merit by the end of the May European PGA Championship, which will earn him a place in the US Open. He is already in the British Open and the US PGA Championship later this year.

"I missed playing in the US Masters this year," added Allenby, "and I want to play in all four majors next year. When I went to Augusta for the first time last year I was still nowhere near fit and couldn't do myself justice."

"I'm back on track after working hard on my fitness, have been since last July, but it's taken a hit longer to get myself back into shape mentally."

The other overnight leader, Australia's Greg Chalmers, had not started by the time his fellow-countryman came in and had six strokes to make up.

The cut-off was expected to be a low one, and Spain's Severiano Ballesteros faced an anxious afternoon to see if he had made it to the weekend after posting a 71 for 140.

In Tsukuba, Japan, Frankie Minniza and Shigeaki Maruyama shot five-under-par 68s yesterday to share a one-stroke lead with Carlos Franco midway through the Kirm Open, the penultimate leg of the ten-event Asian tour.

The second-round leader, Maruyama and Minniza, of the Philippines, at a five-under 137, also tied with the Paraguayan Franco, who had a 67.

Edward Frysatt of England shot a 67 and shared sixth.

England impress as Smith shines

Hockey

By Bill Cowlin

ENGLAND'S impressive pre-World Cup form continued in the Four Nations Invitation Tournament at Springfield, Massachusetts, yesterday when they followed up their 6-0 win against India with a 4-0 victory over Canada.

In blustery conditions, the Slough striker Jane Smith followed up her two goals against India with another brace against the Canadians, opening the scoring at a penalty corner in the 18th minute.

Lucilla Wright put England further ahead from another corner four minutes before the interval. Smith struck again three minutes after the interval with Jane Sixsmith completing the job in the 52nd minute.

Today England play the unbeaten host team who yesterday overcame India 2-0 thanks to two goals inside a minute from Kris Filat.

Hightown's Tina Cullen suffered a facial injury in pre-tour

training practice and has not been available for selection but is expected to play against the US.

The England coach, Maggie Sowrye, said: "It was a good, solid performance in difficult conditions. We managed to control most of the game with strong individual performances from Jane Smith and Lucilla Wright."

England's men also continued in rich goalscoring vein with a 6-1 win over Scotland at Milton Keynes, although to be fair the opposition was not what they will meet in Utrecht at next month's World Cup.

A hat-trick for Jason Lee, scoring his first two goals in the opening 17 minutes, set England on their way. Calum Gilks and Jon Wyatt netted in the first 10 minutes of the second half and a penetrating run by Jimmy Wallis provided Duncan Woods with England's fifth in the 46th minute before Kevin Squier scored Scotland's consolation. Lee completed his hat-trick with four minutes remaining.

Calzaghe prepared to go the distance against Jimenez

Boxing

JOE CALZAGHE goes into the second defence of his World Boxing Organisation super-middleweight title at Cardiff ice rink today knowing that his opponent has never been put on the canvas.

The Paraguayan hard man Juan Carlos Jimenez has, so far, managed to remain upright in all of his 59 fights – and the 37-year-old challenger has been around the heat the final bell in his eight defeats, two of them to Nigel Benn and Chris Eubank in previous attempts at world title glory.

No fewer than 17 of Calzaghe's 22 stoppages in 24 wins have come inside the first three rounds, so it will be pretty much a case of the irresistible force meeting the immovable object.

The former WBO featherweight title challenger Steve Robinson fights on the same bill against the Frenchman Jean-Pierre Dibetza.

Roy Jones Junior and Vir-

gil Hill never fought when they both were champions, but they will finally meet, this time with no title at stake, in a scheduled 12-round fight tonight in the Mississippi Coliseum.

Hill (43-2 with 20 knockouts) said that two years ago, when he was World Boxing Association light heavyweight champion, Jones wanted "something like five million dollars" and was offering Hill \$500,000. Hill instead took a \$2m payday in Germany and beat Henry Maske.

"We had a lot of difficulty putting the fight together, but all of that is behind us now," Hill's promoter, Cedric Kushner, said.

What finally put the bout together was a made-for-TV fight to get Jones back into the ring. It also fills the date for US cable channel Home Box Office, made available when Pernell Whitaker went into drug rehabilitation, causing his challenge against WBA welterweight champion, Ike Quartey, to be cancelled.

Unexpected success for Salisbury

By David Llewellyn

at The Oval

Surrey v Warwickshire

THE clinical removal of the heart of the Warwickshire first innings by the Surrey leg-spinner Ian Salisbury was as perverse in its own way, as the climactic patterns of recent weeks, which have thrown the English way of life (and its cricket) into chaos. It is just not the done thing this early in the season for a spinner to do quite as well as Salisbury managed when he winked out some key batsmen in a remarkable spell of four wickets for four runs in 51 balls.

Cricket scoreboard

Britannic Assurance County Championship

Second day of 110 overs

Durham v Gloucestershire RIVERSIDE: Gloucestershire (opps) have scored 163 for 8 against Durham (2).

Gloucestershire won loss

Gloucestershire - First Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 20, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 17, T Jackson c Soon b Harrison 15, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Second Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Third Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Fourth Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Fifth Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Sixth Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Seventh Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Eighth Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Ninth Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Tenth Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Eleventh Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Twelfth Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Thirteenth Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Fourteenth Innings

1st Innings: C Soon b Harrison 13, P Jackson c Soon b Harrison 13, A J Wright lbw b Wood 1, R J Dawson b Harrison 1, J W Alliss run out 51, D B Suttor not out 31, C S Bishopp not out 19, Extras 163 (61.1nb4) Total (for 8, 61.1nb4) 163

Gloucestershire - Fifteenth Innings

Allen
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Struggling Sampras moving up

Tennis

By John Roberts
in Monte Carlo

A SHEEPISH Pete Sampras is guaranteed to be restored to world No 1 next Monday in spite of giving one of the worst performances of his career at the Monte-Carlo Open here.

The anomaly occurs because an elbow injury prevented the Chilean Marcelo Rios from defending his title, and with it his No 1 ranking, and because yesterday the Czech Petr Korda was unable to take his fourth opportunity of the year to climb to the top.

"It's kind of a flaw in the system," Sampras said, "having cast his fate to others after playing abysmally in losing to the Frenchman Fabrice Santoro in the third round on Thursday.

The 30-year-old Korda, needing to advance to Sunday's final in order to become only the 13th, and the oldest, No 1 since the ATP rankings began in 1973, was defeated in the quarter-finals yesterday by Richard Krajicek, the 1991 Wimbledon champion, 6-3, 6-1. A recurrence of backache hampered Korda, who subsequently withdrew from the double event, in which he had advanced to the quarter-finals in partnership with Andre Agassi.

Korda, who defeated Roger the Australian Open final in January, has since been in a position to overtake Sampras during tournaments in Antwerp, Indian Wells and Key Biscayne (where Rios capitalised) as well as here. Fitness permitting, the Czech may have another opportunity next week in his home tournament. In practice, depending on whether Sampras decides to raise his game immediately, "People don't understand

the ranking system," Sampras said. "It took me a couple of years to figure it out myself. It should be a standing rather than a ranking. If it really comes down to the end of the year, that's when we should be talking about the ranking. I'm going to do everything I can to do my best for now."

Krajicek, who plays the Spaniard Carlos Moyà in the semi-finals today, anticipated that Korda would be "a bit fighty" with a match at stake. This proved to be the case when the set was broken when serving for the opening set at 5-3. The Dutchman lost his concentration in the next game, however, double-faulting to lose the set from 40-0. Krajicek took control after breezing through the second set tie-break, 7-5.

Cédric Pioline defeated his compatriot Santoro, 1-6, 6-2, 6-4, and meets Alberto Berasategui, who curtailed Boris Becker's challenge, 6-7 (4-7), 7-5, 6-1. Most of the day is credited to the television cameras who caught Becker's wife, Barbara, dressed and covering her mouth to stifle a gasp as her husband's tired husband told her what he hoped to do back to playing next year.

Greg Rusedski and Tim Henman, having failed to win a match in Monte Carlo, will endeavour to renew their feet on the clay in Monaco next week, one of the five ATP tour events experimental with allowing coaches on the court between sets. Rusedski and his coach, Tony Pickard, have been scuttling about the idea.

It is a reasonable, if not brilliant, a commonsense idea," the British said. "The sport has been round on its feet for 10 years. To have a coach on the court all the time is not controversial, because it's not one man against

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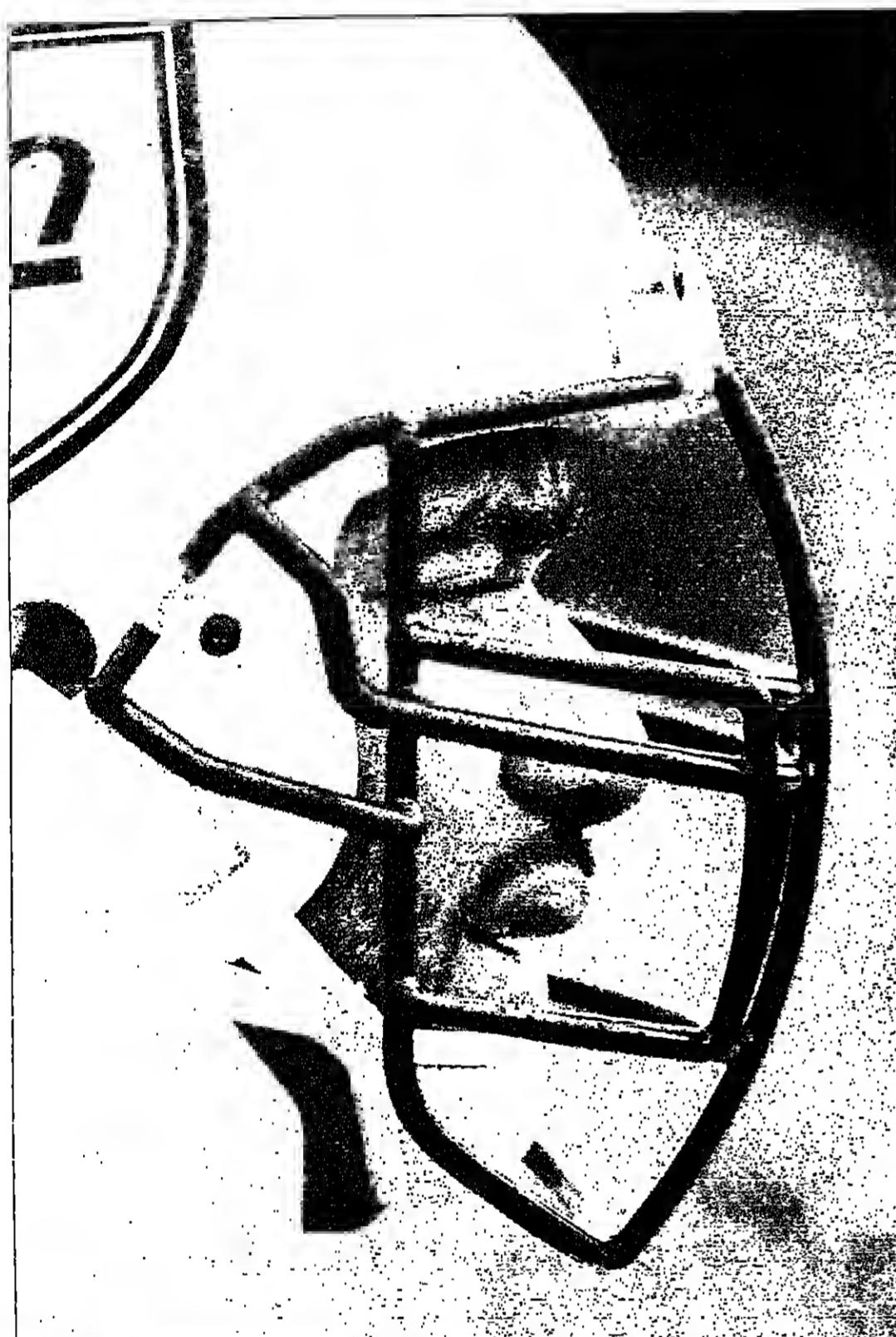
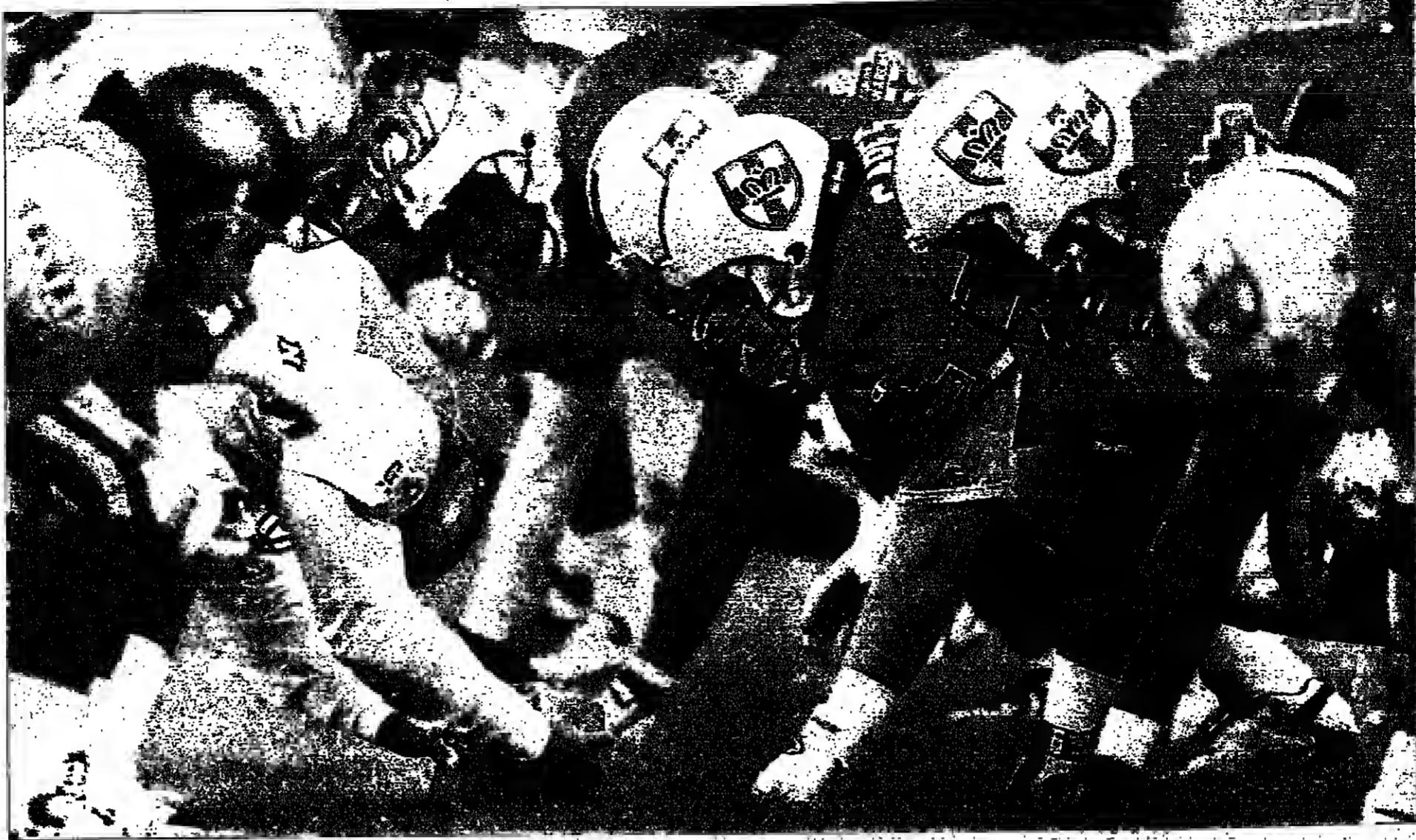
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Gridiron becomes gridlocked

By Nick Halling

IN 1991 the London Monarchs of the World League of American Football were one of the surprise success stories of the year. Benefiting from a massive promotional campaign and considerable on-field prowess, they attracted crowds of 40,000 to their contests at Wembley Stadium as the grid-iron game seemed to establish firm foundations beyond the confines of the United States.

Times have changed. The World League is now the NFL Europe League (reflecting closer ties with the parent National Football League), the team have been renamed the England Monarchs and the crowds have gone, driven away in large measure by a team who have won just 10 of their last 33 games and a franchise seemingly unable to settle on a permanent base.

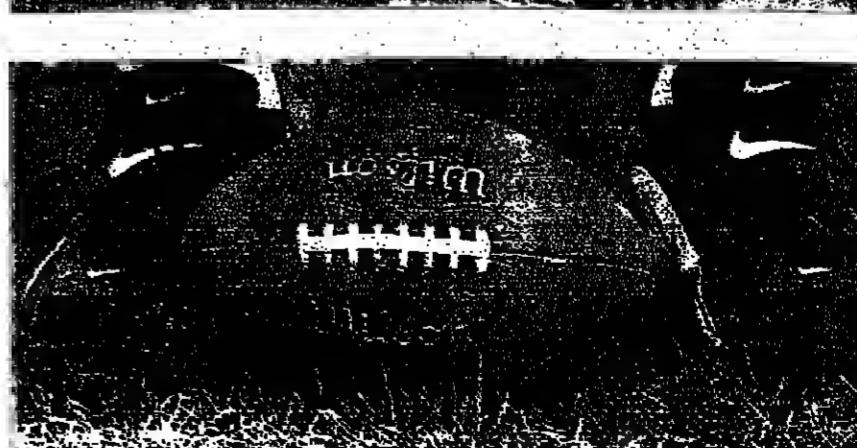
Having moved from Wembley to White Hart Lane to Stamford Bridge, the Monarchs' 1998 campaign kicked off at the National Sports Centre, Crystal Palace, a small but vocal crowd of around 5,000 witnessing another heavy defeat at the hands of the Frankfurt Galaxy (pictured here). A week later at Ashton Gate, Bristol, another comprehensive loss was witnessed by a crowd of just 5,500. Tomorrow they take on the Scottish Claymores at Birmingham's Alexander Stadium.

For all the oo-field gloom, an afternoon with the Monarchs is an event. A pre-game party is keenly enjoyed by younger fans, while inside the stadium an enthusiastic public address announcer and the choreography of the Crown Jewels cheerleader troupe help keep the faithful entertained.

help keep the faithful entertained.

For all the problems in England, the six-team league is making progress on the continent. Frankfurt's gates consistently average around 30,000, while the Düsseldorf-based Rhein Fire now attract in excess of 20,000. The biggest success story, however, is the Amsterdam Admirals, who averaged less than 8,000 in 1995, but drew 22,000 for the visit of the Claymores two weeks ago.

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY
ROBERT HALLAM



Confessions of a football fan that are too true for comfort



CHRIS MAUME
SPORT ON TV

I MUST confess, and this is a criticism only of myself, that I put *Fever Pitch* down about three-quarters of the way through and never picked it up again. Not sure why. Too close to home, perhaps. But one doesn't need to have read the book to be aware of the phenomenon. Not only did it assist in football's swift journey to ubiquity in the early Nineties, it also helped spawn the New Confessional trend that has had publishers in such a fizzy at the same time.

So television has been absurdly slow off the mark, only just getting around to examining its author, Nick Hornby. BBC1's *Ornithos* film took a look at the Arsenal fan and former teacher, the rights to whose third book and second novel

About A Boy, were sold for \$3m. Reviewing it here might seem tangential, even given *Fever Pitch*'s subject matter, but there was plenty of sporting action, Hornby and his biggest fan, Roddy Doyle, taking on Will Self, the bibliophile's Peter Storck (by which I mean critical hard man rather than pornographer - at least I think that's what I mean) in a debate constructed in the editing room.

In hagiographic inserts, a drooling Doyle cooed ecstatically, kicking off with the confession that the first thing *Fever Pitch* taught him and his friends was that compared to Hornby's monomania, their affiliations were mere dalliances.

Self, who has written extensively about his former life as

part of the West Ham Inter-City Crew (OK, that's not strictly true, though you can sort of imagine it), was playing the Devil's Advocate from hell. "The high-level identification that people seem to achieve with the characters and protagonists in Nick Hornby's books typifies a new sub-genre, which I would call 'Wimp Fiction,'" he said. "These are books written for boys who were always in the kitchen at parties." Not a category Self could possibly include himself in. He's far too cool.

"I was always out there, wired out of my bone, dancing around and hopefully grabbing somebody." Charming image. What was bugging the bug-like one was "this kind of identification that Nick's work is at

tracing, and other writers, like Helen [Bridge] Jones Fielding, who're dealing with a kind of quotidian confessional writing. As Martin Amis said, you start off with Homer, where fiction was dealing with heroes, you run down to Shakespeare, where fiction was dealing with kings, down to Joyce, where fiction was dealing with Bloom in Dublin. Now we've run down to Nick Hornby and Helen Fielding, who are dealing essentially with wimpish non-entities moaning about their neuroses."

The editors missed a trick here: they should have cut straight to Hornby later on discussing *About A Boy*. One of the two main characters is "Will, who is very shallow... very much a product of men's magazine cul-

ture." In fact, Self admitted that his assessment of Hornby's literary worth does not emanate from a moral Olympus. "The question of bitterness and rivalry over things like sales, that my rather acerbic comments might be motivated by my own considerably lesser sales, is a very, very just and worthy one. Every writer envies other writers who sell more." There is a sting, of course. "But I wouldn't wish the sales if it weren't for something I considered worthy."

In the spirit of Orwell and Gower (Ernest, not David) Doyle submitted a paean to the art of writing clearly and simply as evidence in Hornby's defense. "If work is readable, or accessible," he says, "therefore it's shallow. You must pile on the

clauses, you must go to the thesaurus to look for the odd obscure word. Then you get a bit of depth. In fact, writing as accessible, as fantastically readable and as entertaining as Nick does takes a huge amount of effort and an awful lot of skill."

Self, though, was in the area advancing on goal. If I were siding with Hornby and Doyle, I might say that if Hornby's team plays at Arsenal Stadium, Highbury, Self's plays at Arsenale Stadium, Highbury. But as a critic I could hardly pillow him for the relish with which he lashed out.

"It's readability masquerading as profundity, and I don't really see anything to be gained from it," he said. Self believes he and his colleagues have a

morality that is nowhere near close to being fulfilled by the Hornby school of writing.

What we as writers need is to attack head-on the way in which television, the way in which film, the way in which advertising destroy the ability to think concentratedly over long periods. And if we're going to be accused of being elitist or highbrow, so be it. That is our job. His nostrils flared.

Hornby was unafraid of the M-word, though. "People want to read but they can't find stuff that means anything to them. There's a middlebrow section of the population that's being excluded." Nick Hornby of Arsenal and Middle England has a ring to it that he has nothing to be ashamed about.

Under threat from tough Norwegians



Grant Dalton, the skipper of Merit Cup, will be looking over his shoulder on the next leg of the Whitbread

leg to go, we are still third overall.

But not by a lot. Our margin of comfort over Chessie Racing has increased to 43 points but Knut Frostad, fourth by eight points behind us in Innovation Kværner, is perilously close. There are 12 points on offer for the last leg across the Atlantic to La Rochelle, so we have to

finish ahead of the Norwegians if we want to hold on to the bronze medal place. And we have to beat Gunnar Krantz's Swedish Match; it's an even bigger margin if we are to challenge for second.

At one stage we were eighth on the water and facing the possibility of slipping from third to fourth overall. But, as I said, it was not all bad, and we were finally given a break when we turned into Chesapeake Bay with the wind behind us; 120 miles of flat water in front of us made it easier to pull back a couple of places.

In the end we recorded the fastest average time of all the nine yachts up those last miles, perhaps helped a little bit by bringing the breeze up with us. We managed to pass John Kostecki and Dennis Conner in the process, and, with just two

legs to go, we are still third overall.

But not by a lot. Our margin of comfort over Chessie Racing has increased to 43 points but Knut Frostad, fourth by eight points behind us in Innovation Kværner, is perilously close. There are 12 points on offer for the last leg across the Atlantic to La Rochelle, so we have to

finish ahead of the Norwegians if we want to hold on to the bronze medal place. And we have to beat Gunnar Krantz's Swedish Match; it's an even bigger margin if we are to challenge for second.

Donewald lost for words after resignation

Basketball

By Richard Taylor

THE Budweiser League lost one of its great talkers yesterday, temporarily at least, when Bob Donewald left Leicester City Riders. Unusually for Donewald in his two-year career with the club, the 26-year-old American kept his comments to a minimum. "I've been lined up for a number of jobs, including some in America," he said.

The official line from the club was that he had resigned with one year of his contract still to run, but such had been the buzz on basketball's bush tele-

graph about Donewald's imminent departure that the Riders have already had applications to replace him.

Club director Kevin Roulledge, who is also the League chairman, said: "Bob has resigned and we wish him well. The club board met on Thursday night and his offer to resign was quickly accepted and we're moving on."

Donewald led the club to the National Cup final in January, which they lost to Thames Valley Tigers, but the season ended badly, with failure to reach the play-off quarter-finals.

It was Donewald's coach with Tigers and their coach, Paul James, which many saw as the

initial step in his inevitable downfall.

Donewald publicly accused James of going behind Tigers' former coach Mick Bett's back to oust him, bringing the threat of legal action from their multi-millionaire owner John Nike. James, a former Rider and England international, was always a strong favourite with the Granby Halls crowd. His twin brothers Eddie and John are still linked with the club and his family live in Leicester.

The incident caused deep embarrassment and Roulledge said yesterday: "We were not impressed with Bob's comments, but the incident was not the trigger to his leaving."

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Donewald's replacement, Division One: Birmingham, Bath, Bristol, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Hereford, Kidderminster, Leyton, Worcester, Northwich, Shrewsbury, Telford, Worcester, Yeovil.

FRONTIER LEAGUE: Premier Division: Andover, Bury, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Hereford, Kidderminster, Leyton, Worcester, Yeovil.

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Colombia: a World Cup nation in the grip of the drugs lords

Not content with buying clubs and running the game, the Colombian mafia now own their own players. David Smith reports on the criminal culture that has taken over the soul of one of England's opponents in France this summer

The call comes in the early hours. Jose-Luis, once a sterling defender for club and country, is on the line saying he can meet in the morning. And that he will talk, with certain provisos. No cameras whatsoever. No microphones. And he chooses the venue, a coffee shop in a fairly rundown neighbourhood of Bogota.

That morning I spend three hours with a man who has won it all in Latin America: league championships, international caps, two South American cups. When I ask him what is on my mind he gives me the kind of knowing look that comes only from those who know. "Soccer in this country is a sordid business, it reflects the culture completely," he warns as he settles down to the first of many coffees. "It is owned by the mafia, run by the mafia, and now it's played by the mafiosi. Even in the World Cup." He pauses, letting the thought sink in. "Especially in the World Cup."

Jose Luis (not his real name, at his request) dismisses my suggestion that the authorities have tried to clean up their act since the debacle of the 1994 World Cup in the United States. "You can't imagine how *podrido* the game is here," he says. I want to go to my dictionary, but the ageing Spanish of mine recalls the word. "*Podrido*" means putrid.

He is the kind of player the eye seizes upon early in a game, the kind of talent the eye stays with. He is fast – deceptively so, in the way Tom Finney was in the 1950s. He can dribble – not quite with the fluency of a George Best, but on a good day he is up to imitate the best of Best in the late 1960s. He can finish, faintly reminiscent of a Paolo Rossi in the 1978 or 1982 World Cups, sometimes deadly ones that window of half chances opens inside the box.

His name is Anthony de Avila. He plays for the tragic football dynasty of the 1990s, Colombia. He is in excellent form, despite banishment to the nether reaches of the game in Latin America. And unless some lawyer from the United States Government stops him, or he is assassinated (either has to be a possibility), De Avila will be lining up, a rather old-fashioned right-winger, against England on 26 June in the town of Lens in northern France in a potentially decisive group game of the 1998 World Cup.

What has this man done to deserve such infamy? Well, De Avila carries extraordinary baggage, even by the standards of Latin America. In another age, from this corner of the world, Di Stefano may have exported the ability to carcass as much as he played; Jairzinho the capacity to drink as freely as he scored; Maradona the licence to drug the body as often as a game-day warrantied.

But De Avila represents another breed, the like of which not even Latin America has produced before. He is a child of the drug lords, the murderous mafia that all but runs a country like Colombia, unashamedly so, the ultimate standard-bearer in the modern game of the cocktail of power, money and influence that goes with football everywhere these days – the vortex that takes a raw, uneducated kid and makes him a god yet leaves him so easily influenced by those who pay his wages, tell him what drugs to take, what shirt to wear. It happens elsewhere too, probably; it is just that we do not see it. In a country like Colombia the process is naked to the eye, as visible as De Avila's talent in the 18-yard box.

Witness what happened on a sweltering, stormy afternoon last August in the port city of Barranquilla, in northern Colombia, on the Caribbean coast. For years the Colombians have played the important matches there, the qualifiers for the World Cup and the grudge matches with the old enemies like Peru and Argentina. The Metropolitan Stadium is akin to a steam room, they say: the crowd invariably lurious to the point of being manic, the atmosphere – for a visiting team – decidedly hostile, deliberately faced with the threat of actual bodily harm if the result goes the wrong way. Colombia have scored some famous victories in the rare ambience of Barranquilla.

This afternoon, against Ecuador in the final qualifier before France, is no exception. If the great players know how to pick their moments, then De Avila does just that. It is 0-0, with three minutes left, in a game Colombia must win. And "El Muchacho" (the kid, as De Avila is known, even though he is now 34) seals it with a goal of classic quality. Lazily, almost indifferently, with little hint of the clinical finish to follow, he pulls down a long ball pumped into the edge of the box. He turns his defender one way, then takes himself the other. He shoots home from the vicinity of the penalty spot as if it is a practice match. The crowd explodes. The kid raises his arms towards God, crosses himself, then races towards the stands and sinks to the ground in silent communion with the adoring nation. It is the goal that will take Colombia such figures of tragedy and collapse in World Cup '94, to France '98.

What happens next is a source of some controversy. De Avila's friends contend he is carried away by the moment. His critics insist it is deliberate. He himself has suggested he was misquoted. Whatever the motivation, the truth is inescapable: it is recorded on a videotape buried in the archive of the state television service, Caracol, in the capital, Bogota. And the videotape does not lie.

De Avila, interviewed live on the pitch the second the game ends, does something surreal, something that is more shocking every time you see the video clip. He dedicates his goal, as if he is inton-



Hero and villains: Anthony de Avila (top), scorer of the goal that took Colombia to the World Cup, shows his ball skills, while the law catches up with the brother drug barons Gilberto (above left) and Miguel (above right) Rodriguez Orejuela

Photographs: AP and Reuters

ing a prayer. "I give this triumph to two men who have been deprived of their liberty," he says. "I dedicate my goal, with respect and love, to Gilberto and Miguel." It's like Alan Shearer saying he owes it all to the Kray twins.

Gilberto and Miguel. Otherwise known as the Brothers: Gilberto and Miguel Rodriguez Orejuela, founders and leaders of the Cali cartel. Estimated annual earnings, from the production and sale of heroin and cocaine: a billion dollars. Estimated assets: seven to eight billion dollars. Current address: La Modelo Prison, Bogota. Family motto: "Better a grave in Colombia than a jail in the United States."

The Brothers, by all accounts, enjoyed watching their boy Anthony score that goal from their home town team, America de Cali. Miguel, who celebrates in the nickname of "The Chess Player," believed it a wise investment: certainly a convenient way to launder vast amounts of illegal drug money, as well as giving him status in the community of Cali.

In the second year of a jail term that will probably end in the year 2001, well ahead of schedule, De Avila's goal and dedication represented yet an-

other reminder of the extraordinary power these two drug lords wield.

Once they were bank robbers and up-country bandits. Then they discovered the marketing attractions of cocaine – chiefly, its phenomenal street value in the major cities of the United States. Unlike their one-time rival for drug hegemony, the infamous Pablo Escobar, they appear to be subtle players, not thugs, even though they have bombed, maimed and slaughtered left, right and middle down the years. So they have bought their way into almost everything in Colombia: the Government, the judiciary, the high street, where they own a nationwide chain of chemists (called Discount Drugs). And, of course, the Brothers bought their way into football.

Don Miguel is the soccer *aficionado*, it seems, the Brother behind the decision to purchase their home town team, America de Cali. Miguel, who celebrates in the nickname of "The Chess Player," believed it a wise investment: certainly a convenient way to launder vast amounts of illegal drug money, as well as giving him status in the community of Cali.

Under the leadership of Don Miguel the team flourished. A key player, and personal favourite, was De Avila, signed as a 15-year-old fresh from the beach-

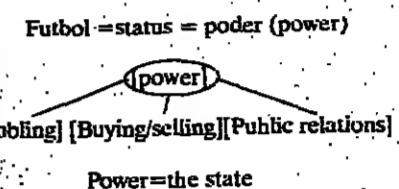
es of his home in Santa Marta, up on the Atlantic coast. De Avila was a prodigy, brought to market by his father, who sold him to Don Miguel for a million and left him completely in the hands of the club.

De Avila "belongs to the Brothers. He is their property," explains Jose-Luis, the former international turned whistle-blower when he finally agreed to talk to me in Bogota. "I don't think Anthony understands the significance of what he's done, how it tarnishes him and the national team. He just thinks he owes it to Don Miguel, and to himself to dedicate the goal. It's his way of saying thank you."

Jose-Luis then takes my notebook and walks me through the reality of life in Colombia's Premier League. "The authorities have tried to purge the game of the mafiosi, with new laws and regulations, but they can't," he says. By his estimate there are only six "clean" teams, by which he means ownership free of the drug cartels. He reels off the names with the easy familiarity of a man who has played in the stadiums of these teams, met the bosses, had a drink with them after a game. Millionarios of Bogota, he says, owned by three families related to the late Gon-

zalo Rodriguez Gacha, arguably the most violent of all the drug lords; Envigado, bequeathed by Pablo Escobar to a chief lieutenant in the Medellin drug cartel; Quindio, the property of an Armenian syndicate; Juniors of Barranquilla, the prize possession of a senator said to have close ties to the drug lords (so close that the United States recently refused him a visa to visit Washington); Santa Fe, controlled by Cesar Villegas, one-time head of the Colombian Football Federation, now in jail for "illegal enrichment" (which is codespeak in Colombia for laundering drug money). He chuckles when I raise America de Cali, De Avila's first team. "The Brothers say it's now the property of one of their sisters, Maria Eugenia," he reveals. "So she's the chairman of the club, OK?"

I wonder what is in this for some of the richest men in the world. Why do the drug lords need a football club, or two, or three, or however many they have? Jose-Luis looks at me like a child in need of a simple lesson. He turns the page of my notebook and draws me a diagram.



"You see, through football, the drug lords have bought their way, absolutely, into the State. Soccer gives them a way to gamble without ever losing, to buy and sell legitimately, to have access to the mass media whenever they want. Come Saturday evening, or Sunday afternoon, the people of Colombia are watching their teams, their players, their property, and everyone knows that it's theirs," Jose-Luis concludes. "Come World Cup time, the drug lords have Anthony de Avila out scoring goals for them. First for them. Then for Colombia."

Indeed they do. And, finally, a rare encounter with Anthony de Avila confirms it in a way I had never expected, not even all the end of chases that had lasted months.

A Colombian sports journalist, who reiterated almost everything Jose-Luis said, had warned me early on that De Avila himself would clasp up the minute I mentioned the Brothers, Gilberto and Miguel. "He insists he never said those words you've seen on TV," the journalist told me.

De Avila, in the twilight of his career now, has been punished for his tribute to the Cali cartel. At the time of that infamous goal, he was playing for the New York Metros in America's Major League Soccer. Shortly afterwards, the team announced firmly they were not taking up the option to extend his contract. De Avila has since joined Barcelona of Ecuador.

Anyway, on a sweltering afternoon in New Haven, Connecticut, to be precise at the Yale Bowl, the crumbling dome where Harvard and Yale have played American football every year since 1914. I finally watch and meet the irrepressible Anthony de Avila. He is clever on the ball, you have to give him that Colombia are playing Paraguay in a World Cup warm-up and he makes a solid defence look slow and foolish. He gives his full-back a terrible time.

When he is taken off after an hour or so, he retreats quickly to the clubhouse, hidden behind the tennis courts, rather like some Edwardian caricature of the playing fields of Oxford and Cambridge. I ambush him there with my microphone, camera and notebook. To my astonishment, he does not deny anything.

"Why did you dedicate that famous goal of yours to the drug lords?" I ask.

"Because it was the human thing to do," he replies. "I felt the prison sentences they got were a shame, unjust, a shame. I wanted to send them my best wishes, good health."

"But how can a footballer dedicate a goal to drug lords?"

"That was what I believed is right. And you should respect that." The look in the eye he is giving me is unmistakably defiant. "I did it because I wanted to."

In 1994 Colombia were one of the favourites for the World Cup in America, only to crash in highly dubious defeat to Team USA (the defender who scored an own goal that day, Andres Escobar, was assassinated on his return home to Medellin, fuelling the belief that the team took a dive: all parts of a supposed gambling coup). This time, in contrast, few expect Colombia even to make it out of England's group. This an ageing team, still built around the venerable but increasingly pedestrian Carlos Valderrama in midfield. Faustino Asprilla, latterly of Newcastle, now back at Parma, has been suffering with a knee injury. One key defender, Wilson Perez of Deportivo Medellin, may simply not be allowed to travel to France after his recent arrest for possession of an undisclosed amount of cocaine in Barranquilla.

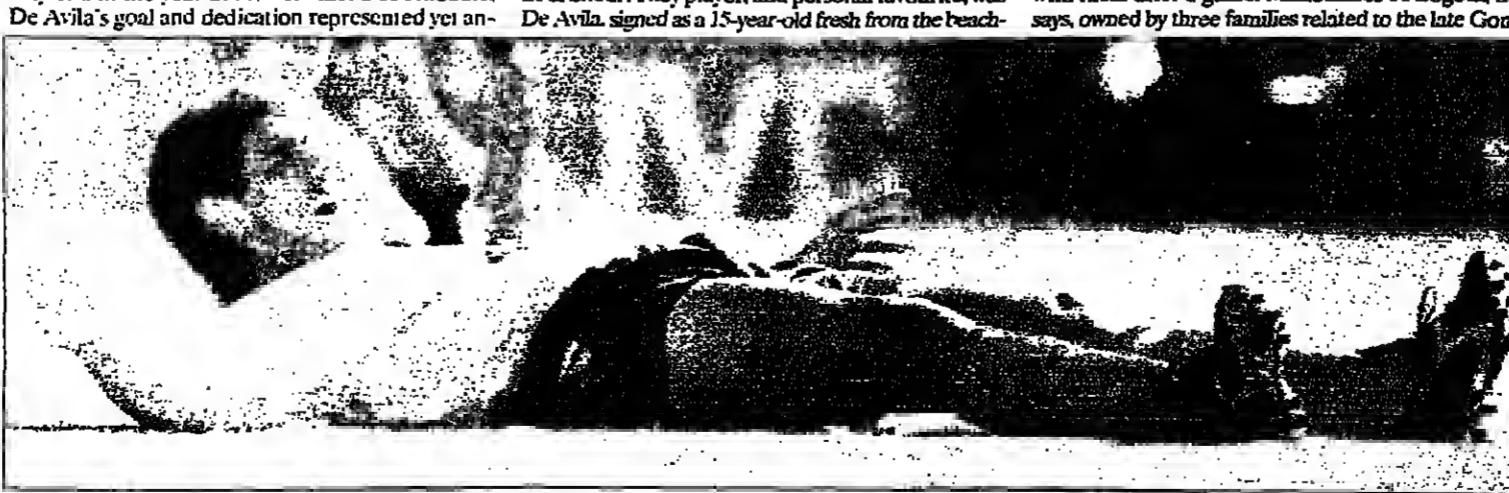
There are youngsters coming through, but they hardly express optimism. Alexander Posada, from the Armenian syndicate's team, Quindio, is typical. "Colombia needs a good World Cup," he says, "to forget about our tragic past. To show the world a different image." Like other home-based players expected to make the squad for France, he hopes the World Cup will earn him a one-way ticket out of the country.

"It's such a waste of great talent, but this team is in no shape to bother England," says Jose-Luis as we end our clandestine session in a coffee shop outside Bogota. "The tragedy is no one thinks any more of playing for La Patria (the country), it's every player for himself. I don't blame any of them, I understand why they behave the way they do. If you'd ever sat down with Don Miguel, and negotiated a contract, you'd understand too."

In the course of chasing this story, and Anthony de Avila, I find just one player who is optimistic. Yes, of course, it's the man who scored the goal that takes Colombia to France.

"Ready for England?" I ask outside the Yale Bowl. "Sure," De Avila says. "We are ready for anyone and everyone in the World Cup. We are." And he has that look in his eye.

David Smith is Washington Correspondent for Channel Four News



Andres Escobar in despair after scoring an own goal for Colombia in the 1994 World Cup. On returning to his home country he was murdered

Faith healing no match for curse of the referee



THE GAFFER TAPES

HONESTLY, I don't know what all the fuss was about. I mentioned in my column last week that Eileen Dwyer would be in the England team hotel and yet, when Glenn tells everybody on Monday the media go mad. Remember, you read it here first.

I can't understand why everyone was so sceptical either, what's wrong with a faith healer? Anything that might give you an edge is worth trying. We took a white-magic wizard to Anfield with us once, it was an attempt to match the black magic of the referee who always gave them a penalty in front of the Kop. Unfortunately, the wiz was thrown out after the security staff caught him trying to douse the ref's changing room with a "magic potion". It turned out it was nothing more than goat's urine. I wouldn't mind but half our team had drunk it as they thought it might bring good luck.

It didn't put me off though and we've had all sorts since. Thanks to the advice of the Feng

Shui bloke - or was it *Ideal Home* magazine - the visitors' dressing room has been painted black and has rusting corrugated iron benches with rusty nails for clothes hooks on one side and soft leather upholstered seats with personal minibar fridges on the other. The idea is to create disarray in the opposition.

We've also been using a faith healer, Abbie Cadabra. Shona Prone's been to see her almost every week and, while she never seems to cure any of his injuries, she's done wonders for his morale, they're engaged to be married in the summer. In view of that, perhaps I ought to get Shona to my another faith healer, you don't want to keep mixing business and pleasure. It could be that Abbie likes him home on Saturdays.

Anyway, I said to Glenn as we went off for dinner at Druids on Tuesday: "Don't let it worry you." Fortunately he soon perked up, they had frogspawn-and-eye-of-newt pie on the

menu, one of his favourites. We washed it down with a bottle of Bulls Blood (no, not real bulls' blood - we had that as an aperitif) and he was soon flying on again.

I wish I was, our results have taken a turn for the worse recently and we're right back in the relegation dogfight. I'm not sure if my overpaid millionaires have got the stomach for it, especially as Broccoli Moore and Fritz Unstarz have already negotiated moves to Krak Komyn and Real Egutone.

Then there's the Jamaican boys, Delroy Rasta and Leroy Ganja, who seem to be more interested in the World Cup than staying up. At least it's broadening their minds, every week they come back from somewhere outlandish saying: "Gaffer, you wouldn't believe the natives, they're so weird." At least it was only Iran this week, the other month they had to go to Wales, it took them days to get back, they must have gone via

Virgin Rail's Liverpool express service.

Anyway, the chairman's started leading comments to the press about "needing a win" and "highest paid manager in Sludgehorpe" - as if there were any others. I'm beginning to sense my time could be up so I'm trying to bring forward some of my planned summer buys to make sure I get my cut in my hand before the end of May.

I've got a knife in the back. It's not as if our position is

my fault. It's all down to the referee who didn't give our goal at Highbury a couple of months ago. Nothing to do with bad team selection, bad coaching, bad signings, bad players, bad attitudes, just bad refereeing.

And I think I have the support of all my fellow managers in the relegation zone - or anywhere else in the table for that matter - when I blame the ref for anything that has gone wrong this season.

It is the inconsistency which

is the worst thing. Last week we

were one-down in the last

minute when Lenny played Duane Spice through. He was just about to beat the keeper when the ref pulled him up for offside. Television cameras proved conclusively that he was only a yard offside and linesmen hardly ever spot that so why get it right this time. That sort of inconsistency will see me on the

bench by the end of May.

For Niggle's out today, he's

got repetitive strain injury from

calling the World Cup ticket line.

Prone returns. He's just

come back from seeing Eileen

and she's convinced him he's not

as fit since he was an Eritrean

warrior in one of his other

lives. Now all we have to do

is find his squad shirt and dust

the mould off.

PS - Apologies to all those who sent in for a ticket or purchase. Due to a telecommunications problem we may not be able to meet the very high demand. All those who do not receive the tickets requested will be refunded in full - minus a small administrative surcharge - if they can provide proof of purchase and a court cost judgment.

Barry Gaffer was talking to

Glenn Moore

United in hunt for Ortega

By Alan Nixon

MANCHESTER UNITED are pursuing the player described as the new Maradona, Argentina's World Cup play-maker Ariel Ortega. Alex Ferguson sent his assistant Brian Kidd to watch the Valencia player against the Republic of Ireland in midweek.

Ferguson has been on Ortega's trail for weeks since hearing that he is unhappy in Spain. Martin Ferguson, the manager's brother, has also been to see Ortega play in Valencia.

Ortega will move in the summer for around £20m but United may step in before the World Cup to secure a deal.

The United chief executive Martin Edwards made an inquiry about Alessandro del Piero last week, but Juventus quoted him £25m. The Old Trafford club, even with all its wealth, will not pay those sums. However, Ortega is in their budget.

Ortega joined Valencia from River Plate in Argentina 12 months ago for £8m, but his much heralded arrival turned sour. The skilful play-maker fell out with the coach Claudio Raimieri and has been unable to keep his place in the side.

Terry Venables has set up his first signing for Crystal Palace. The Ghana captain Charles Akonnor, in a £2m deal. Venables has told the club's prospective owner, Mark Goldberg, to arrange the transfer and German sources revealed last night that they have agreed terms with the midfielder.

Akonnor was due to move

from Fortuna Cologne to

Göttersloch in the German second division, but Venables has stepped in for the midfielder.

Although Venables has not taken charge of Palace, he is already making plans for next season and has targeted a couple of other players.

Palace's plans to play in Europe next season have been scuppered after a Uefa ruling cleared the way for Aston Villa to enter the Inter-Ito Cup.

Palace had declared an interest in this summer's competition as a route to a Uefa Cup place, but Villa's recent good form has seen them rise to eighth in the Premiership, ensuring them qualification as the highest-placed club.

A spokesman for European football's governing body yesterday clarified its criterion for qualification: "The English club which will enter the tournament out of any that are interested will be the one finishing highest in the Premier League."

Fifa, the game's world body, is refusing to step into the World Cup ticket row after praising organisers for doing "a tremendous job".

The French have responded to criticism from the European Union over ticket sales by setting up a phone line to sell 110,000 tickets to supporters throughout Europe.

A Fifa spokesman insisted: "I understand some 30m people have been calling in but there are 2.5m tickets available for the World Cup. We'd like to see any kind of organisation handle 30m fans' calls under any kind of circumstances."

The French have done a tremendous job in the light of the enormous difficulties, both on the logistical side and how to balance the distribution."

Nottingham Forest are ready to pay £3.5m for Brondby's international striker Ebbe Sand, the leading scorer in Denmark's top division with 25 goals.



Wanted man: Ariel Ortega, who is a target for Manchester United. Photograph: Empics

Kinkladze back in the frame

JOE ROYLE has confirmed that he will turn to Georgi Kinkladze in Manchester City's hour of need. The Maine Road manager, who has shunned the Georgian striker for the last six games claiming transfer talks between City and Ajax over the midfielder had turned his head, will play Kinkladze in today's First Division relegation game with Queen's Park Rangers.

Opting to play Kinkladze again could be Royle's last option. "I spoke to him on Monday and he said he'd love to play his part in keeping us up and repay the fans for their loyalty," Royle said. "If he is in a positive mood like that he has to be considered."

While City have a fight on their hands to stay in the First Division, the promotion race has six teams battling it out for automatic entry into the Premier League.

With Birmingham City and Wolves realistically out of the picture and Nottingham Forest just one win from an immediate return, the race is on for the

second automatic promotion spot.

The former England international, Gary Stevens, has endured the play-off path with Tranmere Rovers where he lost to Reading in May 1995.

After playing against all the front runners this season Stevens reckons Forest are the best-equipped to win promotion to the Premier League.

"Nottingham Forest are easily the favourites. They play the most exciting football and are a massive club," Stevens said. "The striking partnership of Pierre Van Hooijdonk and Kevin Campbell has been on fire and they look a good bet for the Premiership next season."

"Sunderland have done some very strange things through the season - from management down to the players who have left. If they were serious about a challenge you wouldn't expect them to sell as many of their squad as they have this year. Having said that, and with everything against them, they're still a strong side."

me in Paul Merson, the best player in the First Division this year. Add Gazzetta to the equation and you have a side that should be in the Premiership. However, promotion is no way guaranteed."

"We play Charlton on Saturday and are hoping to dent their hopes a little bit. But it says a lot for their team spirit that they're up there. They've got the right blend and have had good form at exactly the right time."

"I haven't seen much of Ipswich to be honest but they've put their foot on the pedal at just the right time. The number of goals they have scored is amazing."

"Sheffield United have done

across the Channel has taken second billing in his end-of-season priorities: "My aim has always been first and foremost to perform as well as possible for Aberdeen," he insisted. "Last Sunday's victory was crucial as it took us away from the danger area, but tomorrow's game is equally important as we are aware that a win will mean we will definitely stay up."

"The talented forward is hoping to shake off the calf injury that forced him out of Scotland's midweek friendly with Finland, 1-1 draw, and will want to further his claims by catching Brown's eye in the game at Rugby Park."

Jess was a vital cog in the Dons' impressive 10-1 victory over Rangers last Sunday that lifted Alex Miller's side up to sixth place, their highest position of a troubled season at Pittodrie.

But the former Coventry player, who has responded well in the months since Miller's arrival, was upset at comments attributed to him afterwards claiming the win was more important to him than being picked for Scotland.

Miller is also banking on

Stephen Glass recovering from the groin problem that forced his withdrawal from the Scotland B squad which lost 2-1 to Norway B in midweek, with Mike Newell set to continue up front. "If we show the same level of performance as last week then I'm sure we will do well enough," Miller said.

SIDELINES

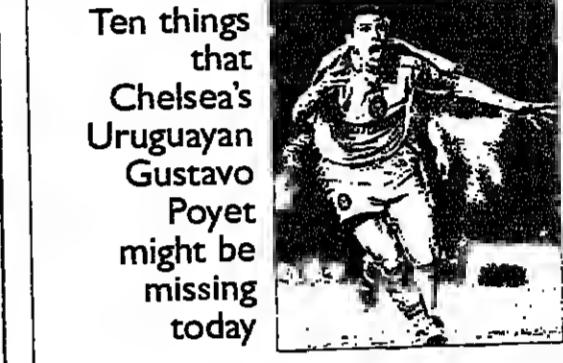
Fabulous Baker buoyed everyone

RUSSIAN, American and Dutch goalkeepers will be involved in today's meeting of Chelsea and Liverpool, not to mention David James, of Parisian catwalk fame. For all that, it is a safe bet that none boasts a background quite as exotic or eccentric as Ben Howard Baker.

Born on Merseyside in 1892, Howard Baker's first loyalty was to the great amateur club Corinthians. He also helped out Liverpool, Everton and Chelsea, and kept clean sheets on both his appearances for England. Yet he was even better known as a high jumper, competing in two Olympics and setting a UK record that lasted 25 years as well as playing lawn tennis and water polo to a high standard.

Howard Baker once scored Chelsea's winner from the spot against Bradford City and thought nothing of venturing upfield in a manner that made Bruce Grobbelaar appear a model of propriety. As he lived to the age of 95, he was seen Joey Jones do much the same for both Chelsea and Liverpool, although the marauding Welshman at least had the excuse of being a full-back.

Nigel Spackman and David Speedie have since represented both clubs, while Bobby Campbell, a Liverpool squad player at the start of Bill Shankly's reign, went on to manage Chelsea for three years from 1988. When Spackman moved from Stamford Bridge to Anfield for £400,000 in 1987, he was following in the footsteps of Tony Hateley 20 years earlier, although the £100,000 centre-forward was not known for using his feet.



Ten things that Chelsea's Uruguayan Gustavo Poyet might be missing today

- 1 A rich history of corned beef. The Liebig Meat Extract Company of London started operations in the town of Fray Bentos in 1864.
- 2 Cheap morino jumpers. Wool is the country's main export product.
- 3 A *parillada* (steak platter) washed down with a glass of *cleric* (white wine mixed with fruit juice).
- 4 Novels such as *No Man's Land* and *A Brief Life*. Not accounts of Raul Gullit's career at Stamford Bridge, but renowned works by Juan Carlos Onetti.
- 5 Montevideo, the capital, where the 26-storey Palacio Salvo (the country's tallest building) puts the Chelsea hotel in the shade.
- 6 Mercedes, the livestock centre and holiday resort.
- 7 The Riviera east of Montevideo, with its scenic coastline and sandy beaches.
- 8 Sea-lion colonies.
- 9 The unifying hybrid language, *criollo*. Useful when at the bridge?
- 10 Week-long carnivals.

NAME OF THE GAME

No 32: HAIDUK SPLIT

The club were formed in 1911 by students who brought a football home to the Croatian town of Split after studying in Prague. Unable to agree on a name, they rushed into the office of their college principal to seek his opinion. The principal, unhappy with their unannounced entry, suggested that as the students had entered his office "like bandits", that was what they should call themselves. "Hajduk" is the local term for bandits.

THIS WEEK

ON 25 April 1931, attention switched from the race to be League champions to the fight for the FA Cup.

Arsenal's 3-1 win over Liverpool the previous week had given them an unassailable lead in the First Division (and hence their first title), so all eyes turned to the Cup final contest at Wembley between Birmingham City and West Bromwich Albion.

"Over 94,000 people will watch, but over 1,000,000 will 'listen in' to the BBC's broadcast description of the game," said one newspaper on the morning of the game.

"And in the evening, thousands will see a 600ft of talkie film showing the most

HISTORY LESSON

THE First Division's leading teams will be well aware of the struggle that faces them should they win promotion.

Assuming that this season's bottom three fail to escape from the drop zone, only five of the 17 teams promoted to the Premiership since 1992 will have managed to preserve their position in the top flight: Blackburn Rovers (promoted via the play-offs in 1992), Newcastle and Middlesbrough know through experience how difficult it is to bridge the divisional gap.

Forest and Sunderland have known both promotion

and relegation from the Premiership, while Boro' have experienced both fates twice.

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Gunners in mould of past masters



Inspirational: Frank McLintock led Arsenal to their Double success. Photograph: Allsport



Highbury's Double-chasers are more exotic than the '71 squad, but Don Howe (left) tells Glenn Moore they've learnt the Arsenal attitude

THE CURRENT team have Dutch, French, Liberian and Austrian influences but, although the most exotic element of their predecessors was Bob McNab's collection of kipper ties and floral shirts, Arsenal's modern Double-chasers have much in common with the successful vintage of 1970-71.

It is not just that Arsenal, who are at Barnsley today, have unexpectedly come from way behind to overhaul the old favourites, nor that their surge involved a number of 1-0 wins, the nature of the team is also uncannily similar.

Don Howe was coach to the double winners 28 years ago and is now back at Highbury as head youth coach. He recalled, at Arsenal's London Colney training ground this week: "The teams are similar in composition and tactics. When I watch Marc Overmars I see Georgie Armstrong, while Tony Adams is a terrific captain in the mould of Frank McLintock.

"They both played 4-3-3 with good goalkeepers in Bob Wilson and David Seaman; a back four that was hard to break down; and a good anchor in midfield, Peter Storey and George Graham then. Emmanuel Petit and Patrick Vieira now. The quality of this team is Petit, Vieira and Ray Parlour. The others are all good players but that is the quality of this team."

It is not just about players. Arsenal has always had a special feel and Howe believes this has transmitted itself to the present team.

"It's the spirit of the place," said Howe, who first arrived at Highbury, as a player, 34 years ago this month. "A lot of people are jealous of it, it has a real dogged spirit. No one comes up and says [his voice drops to a heavy whisper] 'this is The Arsenal, you've got to start winning son', it is something in the atmosphere. It seems to convert people. I sense it with the foreign lads, they have absorbed this thing about the strength of The Arsenal.

"Arsene [Wenger] wouldn't know this but he has virtually gone the same way as if we'd said this is how we do things at Arsenal—a back four, a winger, two up front". When he came we'd been playing three at the back and he said 'I'm going to play with a back four'. And everybody thought, 'hang on, here's a bloke from the continent, who we thought would have new ideas, who wants to do what we've always done'. He's done it and it's all fitted in."

Wenger himself has talked at length of the strength of Arsenal's team spirit, much of which is inherited from George Graham who was, himself, heavily influenced by his time under Howe and Bertie Mee in the Double-winning side.

"That team was born out of failure," Howe said. "We lost to Leeds in the old League Cup in '68 and the following year we lost to Swindon. The effect was positive, they got so frustrated with losing it made them more hungry. Failure hardened them."

The following season Arsenal won their first trophy for 17 years, the Fairs (now UEFA) Cup. They defeated Johan Cruyff's Ajax before overcoming a 3-1 first-leg deficit against Anderlecht in the final.

But, having finished in the bottom half in the League, they were not fancied for the title. At the season's start only four players were internationals with McLintock, with six caps, the most decorated.

But the ingredients were fitted into place. Storey was moved from right-back, where he was replaced by Pat Rice, to midfield; Ray Kennedy came in alongside John Radford and Graham, a former centre-forward, settled to his new position of left-half. "It wasn't planned, it just happened by chance," Howe said. "Bertie tried him and suddenly his career took on a new lease of life."

There were two other incidents that bonded the team; a brawl in Rome when, after a European tie, they were set on by Lazio players at a post-match function; and a 5-0 defeat at Stoke City.

Arsenal were still well behind in February when Charlie George came into the team for Jon Samuels. "He was a skilful, whole-hearted trier," said Howe of Samuels, "but the crowd didn't take to him. We thought he was an outstanding player but it got to him."

Arsenal now won nine games

on the trot and, on 20 April took

a clear lead for the first time –

the current team have won sev-

en on the trot and first led on 18

April. The title was clinched in dramatic style with a 1-0 win at White Hart Lane to beat Leeds on goal average. Five days later they defeated Liverpool in extra-time to win the FA Cup. It was their 64th

game of the season –

10 more than the current team are scheduled to play.

The win was greeted with the headline: "You're b**es" but Howe said: "People say 'boring Arsenal' but it is a load of cobblers, we've always been able to defend well rather than being defensive. Flair? You can't have a better player than Charlie George. Go into a pub around Highbury with fans who go back a few years and say: 'Who's best, Bergkamp, Brady or George?' They'll argue for years."

Then, as now, the most important thing was to keep the players fresh. "We went to our doctor, Dr Thomas, and he said: 'Let them have stacks of time away from each other so when they meet up they have something to talk about. Otherwise players get stale, they get fed up with each other.' Arsene's very clever, he's good at psychology, and he's doing similar things."

"Everybody is impressed with the vitality about their play, they look like pre-season. Everybody is saying 'what are you doing with them, we're knackered and Arsenal are running all over the place'. He's not doing anything just giving them stacks of rest."

"The double is there to be achieved as it was for us. It's like climbing a mountain, you can see the peak but you've got to take it one step at a time and make sure you don't slip."

"I don't think it is any harder now, or any easier, but a lot of people can stop you. I remember with Wimbledon [he was coach to Bobby Gould] in '88 we got to the final to play Liverpool. Liverpool were going to do the Double and no one gave us a chance, but we beat them."

Something for Arsenal and Barnsley to ponder today.



Rock steady: Tony Adams captains Arsenal by example. Photograph: Empics

by Glenn Moore

THE 1998 CROP

David Seaman

(27 lgs; 3 FAC; England, 39 caps) Commanding goalkeeper at the peak of his form and one of the best in the world. Coached by Double predecessor Bob Wilson.

Lee Dixon

(22+2 sub lgs; 6 FAC; England, 21) Overlapping right-back with more than 400 appearances for Arsenal. In his benefit season:

Nigel Winterburn

(31+1 sub lgs; 1 gl; 7 FAC; England, 21) Should make 500th Arsenal appearance before the end of the season. Left-back whose determined attitude compensates for his dependence on left foot.

Martin Keown

(14 lgs; 6 FAC; England, 16) Defender in second spell with club and now enjoying benefits of spells in midfield and as specialist man-markers. Fans' player of the year last season.

Tony Adams

(22 lgs; 2 gls; 5 FAC; England, 50) Captain for over a decade with more than 500 Arsenal appearances at centre-half. Recovered from grueling battle with alcoholism and injury.

Steve Bould

(20+2 sub lgs; 4+1 sub FAC; England, 2) Another in his benefit season. Uncompromising centre-half who, like Adams and Keown, has expanded his game.

Ray Parlour

(20 lgs; 5 gls; 6 FAC; 1 gl; Unspecified) Right-sided midfielder enjoying best season of career after overcoming predilection for wild living. Currently in England squad awaiting debut.

Emmanuel Petit

(20 lgs; 1 gl; 6 FAC; France, 16) Veteran left-half and defensive midfielder who has settled in front of back four. Good passer and tackler, with outside chance of French World Cup squad.

Patrick Vieira

(27 lgs; 1 sub lgs; 2 gls; 7+1 sub FAC; France, 6) Former solid central midfield partner with Petit which is at heart of team's success. Solid ladder and dangerous runner with ball. Back in French team:

Marc Overmars
(28 lgs; 9 gls; 7+1 sub FAC; 1 gl; Netherlands, 38) Outstanding right-back who has returned to season to show past and present remembrance of golden days at Ajax, scoring crucial goal at Old Trafford.

Dennis Bergkamp
(28 lgs; 15 gls; 7 gls; 7 gls; Netherlands, 57) PFA Player of the Year whose glittering skills have added extra dimension to Arsenal attack. Poor disciplinary record due to occasional flashes of temper.

Nicholas Anelka
(12+1 sub lgs; 6 gls; 7+1 sub FAC; 2 gls; France, 1) Looked out of his depth early in season but has since had the cold test by Ian Wright's injury. Made French debut on Wednesday.

Thierry Henry
(12 lgs; 10 gls; 5 FAC; France, 1) Has formed a basis of Arsenal's post-Chelsea run of successes. Also played this season: Ian Wright (20+1 lgs; 10 gls; 1 FAC); Gilles Grimandi (14+6 lgs; 1 gl; 1+2 FAC); David Platt (6+17 lgs; 3 gls; 1+2 FAC); Steve Harper (8+1 lgs; 2 gls; 3+3 FAC); Alex Manninger (6 lgs; 1 gl); René Gérard (5+4 lgs; 1 gl); Christopher Wondolowski (8+5 lgs; 3 gls; 1+4 FAC; 1 gl); Matthew Upson (4 lgs; 1 gl); Luis Boa Morte (3+7 lgs; 1+3 gls); Scott Marshall (1+2 lgs); Alfonso Márquez (1+1 lgs); Fabio Vassalli (1 gl); Ismael Rankin (0+1 lgs); Gavin McCowan (0+1 lgs); Jason Crowe (0+1 FAC; 1 gl in 1 lg).

Why



ASON VILLE

ASIAN VILLE

THE VINTAGE

by Ken Jones

Bob Wilson
(42 lgs; 9 FAC; Scotland International, 0 caps at time of FA Cup final (won 2 in all). Now TV presenter and Arsenal goalkeeping coach. Lives in Herts)

Chose football over a career in teaching. Great passion for the game. No stylist but courage and intelligence brought about increased authority.

Pat Rice

(41 lgs; 9 FAC; N Ireland, 2+91; Arsenal first team coach. Lives in Herts)

Became Arsenal's regular right back in 1970 when Peter Storey was switched to midfield. Reliable rather than adventurous.

Frank McLintock

(42 lgs; 9 gls; 9 FAC; Scotland 6 (8). TV pundit and agent. Lives in Herts)

An inspirational captain whose career was transformed by a switch from midfield. An outstanding central defender who led by example.

Peter Simpson

(35 lgs; 9 FAC; Unspecified. Runs a haulage company. Lives in Herts)

Undrafted defender at a time when England could call on Bobby Moore and Norman Hunter in his position. Good positional sense. Cool and consistent.

Bob McNab

(40 lgs; 9 FAC; England 4+1; Agent for South American players – he discovered Paolo Wanchope. Lives in USA)

Repaired by McLintock as the games most accomplished covering full-back. Sharp tackler. Quick, enthusiastic and adventurous.

Peter Storey

(40 lgs; 2 gls; 9 FAC; 4 gls; England 1 (19). Lives in London)

A much better player than his hard-man image indicated. Tidy passer whose conversion to midfield brought 19 England caps.

Charlie George

(36+2 sub lgs; 11 gls; 6 FAC; Scotland 0 (12). Manager: Leeds United. Lives in London and Yorkshire)

Hard management style contradicts the laid-back approach natural to a natural-born player. Smart. Deft touch, elegant and intelligent. Majestic heading ability.

George Graham

(42+2 sub lgs; 11 gls; 6 FAC; Scotland 0 (12). Manager: Leeds United. Lives in London and Yorkshire)

Unshakable character is an example to the youngsters for now. Indomitable at Highbury. Indomitable, skillful little winger who could easily be relied on to tackle back.

John Radford

(41 lgs; 15 gls; 7 FAC; 2 gls; England 1 (2). General manager: Arsenal's Stanford, still playing for Old Arsenal. Lives in Herts)

Powerful central nervous system who has enabled Arsenal to build attacks with long passes out of defence. Fit, fast, powerful and unselfish.

John Kennedy

(41 lgs; 19 gls; 9 FAC; 3 gls; England 0 (17). Suffers from Parkinson's disease. Lives in Tyne & Wear)

The left foot was employed to good effect as an Arsenal attacker would prompt transformation to an outstanding midfielder in Liverpool's colours. Formidable in the air.

Eddie Kelly

(21 lgs; 4 gls; 4+2 sub FAC; 1 gl; Uncapped. Salesman. Lives in Devon)

Unspectacular but effective midfielder whose goal in the 1971 FA Cup final was one of his most important contributions.

Also played:

John Roberts (18 lgs); Jon Samuels (3+2 lgs; 1 gl; 5+1 FAC); Sammy Nelson (2+2 lgs); Peter Marinho (1+2 lgs); 2 own goals in 1 gl.

most devoted fans but their protestations have a hollow ring. In his sheer blind fanaticism, the football dad is out on his own. You will see him squelching on ill-defined mud-baths the length and breadth of the country, screeching like a banshee on double time, as he orders his offspring to "get stuck in". Conventional wisdom has it that the football dad is intent on succeeding through his son where he failed himself. This is seldom fair or true. Similar barbs are never hurled at the parent who wants his children to do well in their exams. Perhaps it's just a matter of primitive emotions, rooted deeply in some residual need for male initiation, being more easily exposed on the football pitch than in the examination hall. I once stepped in to break up a fight between a father and a referee following an incident in which a controversial offside decision had been given against a nine-year-old. One cannot imagine having to perform a similar intervention between an irate parent and a chief examiner.

The heart does go out to the

tragic father who discovers, through opaque layers of disbelief, that his son is not interested in the game. He doesn't like getting wet or dirty. He cries (oh, the shame of it) when his ankles are ruptured. He would much prefer lessons in ballroom dancing.

More sad is the case of the boy who is desperately keen, but is nowhere near good enough for the team into which his father is trying to push him. Daniel turns up every week and, if the result is beyond doubt, he comes on for the last three minutes as fifth substitute.

His father's suggestion that the team would be improved if Jason moved to centre defence and Daniel came in on the left side of midfield is met by a stony silence from the other dads.

Why Beckham gets a kick out of syntactic foam



OLIVIA BLAIR
ON THE
EVOLUTION
OF THE
MATCH-DAY
FOOTBALL

HOW ironic it was that old Billy McPhail should use the phrase "lone ranger" during his campaign to blame his pre-season dementia on the old brown leather football that landed regularly on his head through out his 17-year playing career for Queen's Park, Clyde and Celtic.

Because McPhail's claim to fame is the unforgettable hat-trick of headers he scored for Celtic in their 7-1 drubbing of Rangers in the 1957 Scottish League Cup final – although given that the 70-year-old is suffering from chronic memory loss, he's probably forgotten all about it.

McPhail's brain, apparently, has been "half-flattened" by the impact. "Sometimes", he

says, "the ball came to you like a bullet, and if it was a wet day it really soaked up the moisture. Today's ball is as light as a feather, but the old one gave you a real thud."

Not every footballer can blame a lack of brain cells on the ball, but it's certainly not the first time the issue has arisen. Several years ago a report in the *New York Times* suggested that "all that bunting the ball with their heads might make their brains go squishy", (any wonder that the game struggled to take off in the US?), but there's little chance of that nowadays, not with the heavyweight sports manufacturers vying to create increasingly lightweight balls.

Adidas' official World Cup

ball, for instance, is apparently lighter than its predecessors at around 431 grams, and World Cup apart, literally, from the brown plastic Slazenger number with which Bobby Moore and Co triumphed back in 1966.

Essentially, should Glenn Hoddle's men come up trumps in France they will do so with a ball that has been subject to the same rigorous R&D as was the Predator boot: a blue, red and white ball christened the *Tricolore*, emblazoned with French symbols – a cockerel, a high-speed train and a turbine meant to symbolise history, energy and speed – and made from 32 panels of something known in the trade as syntactic foam which apparently

guarantees a "tighter, lighter, highly responsive material".

In other words – at least according to David Beckham, who is better known for his ability with a football than for his way with words – the *Tricolore* is "faster, sharper and probably harder to save" than any other ball, while the Italian striker Alessandro Del Piero rather ominously claims it "moves much faster and follows your directions better so you can be more creative and are more likely to score".

Over 3,500 *Tricolore* balls will be used in France, where, with any luck, its "unique properties" will ensure that the standard of free-kicks is significantly better than it was in USA 94. In fact, the mind bog-

gles at the thought of the likes of Roberto Carlos and Dennis Bergkamp with a *Tricolore* at their feet, notwithstanding the fact that Bergkamp is more used to weaving pretty patterns with the Mitre Ultimax ball, which is standard fare in England, while Roberto Carlos' favoured ammunition is Nike's top-of-the-range NK95 GEO baseball, popular in the Spanish and Italian leagues.

But for all the advantages of the modern football, the good old leather ball still served its purpose well enough in its day considering the demands placed on it by the likes of Tommy Lawton, who used to insist that the laces should be facing towards goal when the ball was crossed (which is OK when

you've got Stanley Matthews on the wing but perhaps not so clever when it's Ruell Fox).

But the leather ball began to get a bad press after it burst in successive FA Cup finals, in 1946 and 1947. Aside from the Golden Ball, which was first awarded to the European Footballer of the year (Stanley Matthews) in 1956, the only ball which has truly stood the test of time is the orange ball, which has a special place in the hearts of English football fans.

Like Chris Waddle, it appears only occasionally these days, but still stands out whenever it does. It certainly brought the biggest cheer of the night when it was brought on during the snow at the recent game between Black-

burn and Arsenal, although it did so little for Arsenal's fire-power that their fans began to chant: "We only score with the white ball" (they were 4-1 up at the time and unable to add to that tally).

Perhaps the Tartan Army should have adopted the chant back in 1961 when Scotland suffered that humiliating 0-3 defeat by England, for they would certainly have been singing from the same hymn sheet as the players. "The problem," claimed defender Bobby Shearer, "was that they used an orange ball. Eric Caldow and I were afraid to kick it and Billy McNeil was afraid to touch it." The words "bad", "workman" and "tools" spring to mind.

Aston Villa v Bolton

Yorke 11. Leading scorer: Last season: No fixture

Aston Villa's Stan Collymore is expected to be back on the substitutes' bench today. The £7m striker, who has not started a game since 3 March, returned to training this week after having 10 days off following a cortisone injection intended to help shake off a groin problem. Otherwise Villa manager John Gregory is likely to retain the starting line-up that beat Southampton 2-1 last weekend, a result which gave his team their seventh win in eight Premiership games. Colin Todd hopes that defender Gerry Taggart (who wants to leave the club) will inspire Bolton in their relegation fight. Taggart will be preferred ahead of Chris Fairclough to replace the suspended Andy Todd, having spent most of the last six months out of action. Dean Holdsworth has a hamstring strain and Amar Guntausson is doubtful with a stomach bug. Nathan Blake will be partnered by one of two loan strikers – Bob Taylor or Gaetano Gallianna. Scott Sellars is still out with sciatica and Robbie Elliott and Mike Whittle are missing with long-term injuries. Bolton have won just one of their last five League games, and last won a League match at Villa in 1995.

Barnsley v Arsenal

Redman 14. Leading scorer: Bergkamp 21
Last season: No fixture

Barnsley captain Neil Redman will be fit for today's match. The Tykes' leading scorer, with 14 goals for the season, suffered a calf injury this week but is available to lead the side after shaking off the problem. Midfielder Jovi Bošanac and defender Darren Fletcher are also available after completing one and three-match bans respectively but Chris Morgan and Georgi Hristov are still ruled out through suspension. Martin Keown returns after an eye injury to Arsenal's defence but Ray Parlour is suspended. David Platt, the Tykes' favourite to replace him at Anfield, is reluctant to switch from Overmars' left to right. Steve Bould is available after suspension but will be on the bench along with goalkeeper John Lukic (Alex Manninger has flu). There is no place among the substitutes for Ian Wright, although he is fit after four months out with a knee injury. Manager Arsene Wenger intends to play him in the reserves next Wednesday to start his comeback. Gheorghe Hagi is fit again and takes over from the injured Remi Garde in an 18-man squad. Arsenal's last and only League point, at Old Trafford, came with a 1-1 draw in 1992.

Blackburn v Wimbledon

Sutton 20. Leading scorer: Ewell 8
Last season: 3-1

Blackburn manager Roy Hodgson has four key players suspended as his team attempt to end the poor run of form that has seen them take just six points from the last 30. Colin Hendry, Jason Wilcox, Gary Flitcroft and Billy McKinlay are all banned while Tim Flowers and Calum Davidson are injured. Jeff Kennett and Alan Fettis were injured in midweek internationals for the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland respectively and will have late checks. John Filan, out with a broken arm since August, stands by to deputise for Fettis. Winger Damien Duff and defenders Tore Pedersen and Marlon Broome have all passed fitness checks. Striker Carl Leatton is likely to return to bolster Wimbledon's attacking options against Blackburn after missing last weekend's 5-0 drubbing at Anfield due to a hamstring injury. Nigerian international striker Efan Ekoku looks likely to miss the match due to a troublesome ankle injury, which has restricted his appearances for Wimbledon this season. Prior to last week's defeat, three of Wimbledon's four previous games were goalless draws. The other was a 1-0 win.

Chelsea v Liverpool

Leading scorer: Owen 21
Last season: 1-0

Chelsea's player-manager Gianluca Vialli missed training yesterday with flu but is expected to have recovered in time to consider himself for selection this afternoon. Chelsea, who could move above Liverpool into third place with a victory, are definitely without Celestine Babayaro (toe), Bernard Lambourde (ankle) and Frank Sinclair (groin). Vialli has made a host of changes in the previous few Premiership matches and assistant manager Graham Rix gave no clues yesterday as to who would feature at Stamford Bridge. Michael Owen will miss playing for Liverpool due to suspension. Also definitely out of contention are the injured duo Jamie Redknapp and Steve Harkness, while manager Roy Evans will arrange late fitness tests for Paul Ince, Steve McManaman, Dominic Matteo and David Thompson. Norwegian Oyvind Leonhardsen and Sig Inge Bjørnebye were the last of Liverpool's international players to report back from midweek duties. They both reported for training yesterday unscathed. Liverpool have won two and drawn three of their last five games. Chelsea have won four from the last five in all competitions.

Everton v Sheff Wed

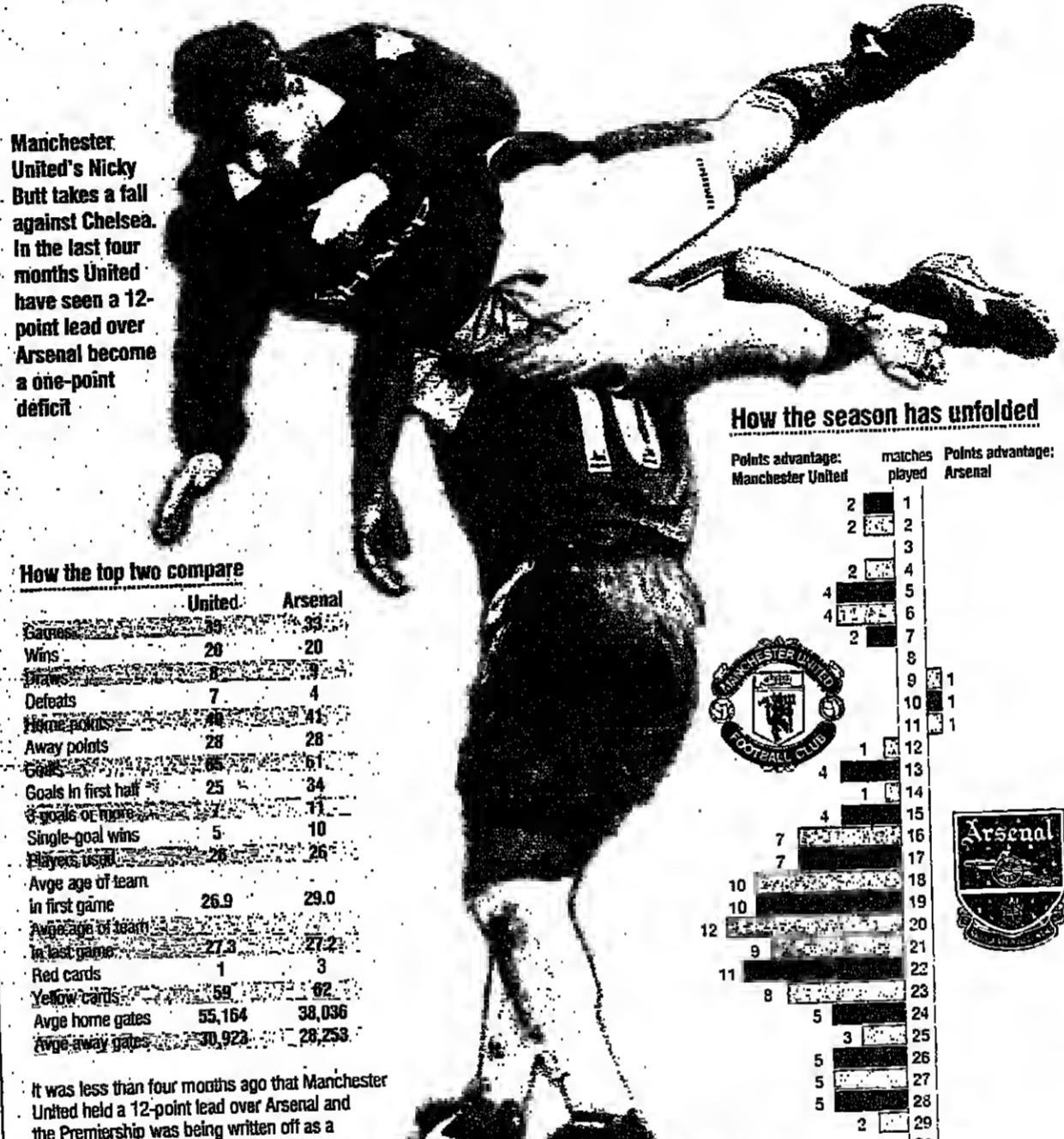
Ferguson 10. Leading scorer: Di Canio 18
Last season: 2-1

Everton's Nick Barmby returns from suspension today and captain Duncan Ferguson should have recovered from flu, while youngsters Michael Ball and Danny Cadamarteri return from England Under-19 duty in France. Goalkeeper Thomas Mythe has come back from international duty for Norway in Denmark having won his first cap, but John Spencer and John O'Kane are both banned. Everton will guarantee their Premiership safety today if they collect three points and both Bolton and Barnsley fail to win.

Sheffield Wednesday manager Ron Atkinson faces selection problems. Italian striker Benito Carbone, defender Dejan Stefanovic and former Evertonian Earl Barrett are all suspended, while Norway international Petter Ruud is out for the last few matches of the season due to a persistent thigh injury. Midfielder Scott Oakes is definitely out, after inflicting Atkinson by not having his shirt on when asked to take to the pitch as a substitute in last week's defeat at Chelsea. Alan Quinn could deputise after joining Wednesday four months ago from Dutch amateur side Cherry Orchard.

...And statistics

How United have tumbled from the top



It was less than four months ago that Manchester United held a 12-point lead over Arsenal and the Premiership was being written off as a one-horse race. As the field now heads for the finishing straight the Gunners have a one-point lead and, with two games in hand, they look set to bring the championship back to Highbury. It has taken Arsene Wenger's team only 13 matches to make up the ground on United.

An analysis of the two teams' form this season shows that Arsenal have won twice as many games as United by the only goal. The London side have recorded six 1-0 wins compared to United's four.

Yet it would be wrong to paint Arsenal as a team who have ground out their results. The two teams' goal totals are similar – United have scored four more but have played two more games – and Arsenal have scored three goals or more on 11 occasions compared with United's seven.

Early in the season Arsenal were relying on more experienced players and their team's average age was two years older than United's. Yet thanks to the presence of youngsters like Nicolas Anelka and Matthew Upson, Arsenal's latest team were actually younger than United's.

Curiously, only two teams in the Premiership have failed to take

any points off the top two. Wimbledon lost all four of their games against them and conceded 13 goals in the process. Barnsley still have to play both teams at home, but lost 7-0 at Old Trafford and 5-0 at Highbury.

One area in which United retain superiority is in their drawing power. At home there is no contest as Old Trafford's capacity is 17,000 more than Highbury's. Yet even away from home United are the bigger draw. Only at White Hart Lane have Arsenal drawn a bigger crowd than the champions – and even that was because Tottenham's capacity had increased by the time Arsenal played them.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: HOW THEY STAND

	Home	Away	Form	Remaining matches									
Pl	Ps	GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	WWWW				
1. Arsenal	39	49	13	13	2	2	38	10	7	7	23	18	LWWDD
2. Man Utd	35	48	+39	2	4	2	39	9	8	4	5	26	DWDWD
3. Liverpool	34	57	+27	11	2	7	33	16	5	9	3	25	LWLWW
4. Chelsea	34	57	+26	11	2	3	31	12	7	1	10	33	26
5. Leeds	35	57	+44	9	1	5	27	17	8	3	7	26	22
6. West Ham	34	52	+5	12	4	1	34	11	3	3	11	31	WLDWW
7. Blackburn	34	51	+5	10	3	4	39	26	4	6	7	16	24
8. Aston Villa	35	51	0	8	3	6	24	21	7	3	8	20	22
9. Derby	34	49	-5	11	3	3	32	17	3	4	10	30	LLDWL
10. Leicester	34	46	+6	5	9	3	20	15	6	4	7	23	LDWDD
11. Coventry	34	46	0	7	6	2	24	17	4	5	8	16	23
12. Southampton	35	44	-5	10	1	7	28	21	3	4	10	17	WLLDL
13. Wimbledon	34	41	-8	5	7	7	16	19	5	5	5	15	LWLDD
14. Sheff Wed	35	41	-4	9	5	4	29	23	2	3	12	19	LDLWD
15. Newcastle	34	40	-8	5									



YOUR MONEY

Personal finance, motoring and property

Saturday 25 April 1988

Harvest the rewards of loyalty

Finishing a weekend's shop with more spending power than you started with sounds impossible. But, as Paul Slade finds, it can be done

In the war between the supermarkets, loyalty cards are an important weapon. The cards not only reward loyal shoppers with points to be redeemed against future bills, but allow the stores to gather valuable information to help them sell us as much stuff as possible. Even Asda, which has until now resisted loyalty cards, has a trial scheme under way.

Each store is constantly battling to overtake its rivals. Safeway launched an assault last week when it announced that ABC cardholders spending £240 or more a month will qualify for triple points from May onwards.

This creates a bizarre situation, allowing canny customers to make a profit when buying certain items. Safeway's scheme means anyone who spends £240 or more at a Safeway store one month qualifies for triple points on everything they buy the following month. All the money you have spent since 1 April counts towards this month's total. Each point is worth 1p.

One of the best standard rates offers Safeway has at the moment - which will last till 24 May - is a £12.99 video which gives you 3,000 points. The videos on offer are *The English Patient* and the fourth series of *Friends*.

All you have to do then is check your total April spend



next time you're in Safeway and, if necessary, top it up to reach the £240 mark. You can then go back in May, buy a £12.99 video, and earn £30

worth of points. Use £26 worth of those points to buy two more videos, and your points total will reach £64. You've only spent £12.99 in cash but that money has bought you three videos and £64 worth of free groceries later in the month - plus the points that go with them.

It sounds too good to be true. But Safeway's product marketing controller Mark Trinder confirms that it works. "If customers are spending the money, they're earning the points," he says. "If you redeem for a product, you'll get points on that product again."

"Suppliers are involved in these product deals, so there's part funding there, as you'd expect. As long as they're getting volume movement through, those guys are happy. This is a big change for the loyalty market, and it will be interesting to see the response."

Even when the videos offer has closed, there will be other products in Safeway stores which give enough points to outstrip their retail price when trebled up.

Tesco would do the same thing to pineapples next, as he was particularly partial to the fruit. Tesco promptly sent him a free case of pineapples.

The supermarket

has a similar scheme which doubles the points on offer for anyone paying with a Sainsbury's Bank Visa card. Reward points on credit cards should be treated with caution, however, unless you plan to pay off what you owe before the end of the interest-free period. Often, the cards with the best reward schemes also charge the highest interest.

Going bananas: Phil Calcott netted a £25 profit and a free case of pineapples by buying 3,000 bananas through Tesco's loyalty card scheme

Photograph: Martin Humble

The best rates for video				
Store	Points value per £1 spent	Spend needed to earn one	Current top points deals (a)	Points needed to earn one
Co-op (b)	1p	£26	£12.99 video (b)	3,000
Safeway	1p	£26	£12.99 video (b)	3,000
Sainsbury's (c)	1p	£26	£12.99 video (b)	3,000
Tesco	1p	£26	£12.99 video (b)	3,000

(a) Based on minimum points allocation. (b) Total points only, normally 10 stores. (c) Points redeemable in batches of 200. (d) Dividend given only on Co-op general products and fresh produce. (e) Selected stores only.

Cash in your assets on retirement

Do you feel like a deadbeat chicken? On days when you're running around here, there and everywhere, holding down a job and trying to have a life as well, retirement can seem like light at the end of the tunnel.

Finally, you'll be able to take it easy and do all the things you've always wanted to do. But one thing you can't do in retirement is overtime so, if you find you need extra income, then you will have to look to your assets to provide it.

Your biggest asset may well be your home. There are financial products on the market designed to give you an income in return for part or all of the value of your house when you die. These are called home-reversion plans, mortgage home-income plans or equity release schemes.

Home-income plans (HIPS) got a bad name in the late Eighties. House prices were buoyant and large mortgages were raised. Money borrowed was used to make investments which were supposed to cover mortgage-interest payments and provide the borrower with an income. But when interest rates shot up, and investments performed pitifully, some unfortunate elderly people holding the plans found themselves in danger of losing their homes.

Cecil Hinton, founder of independent financial advisers Hinton & Wild, which sells home-income plans, blames the disaster on "cowboys" who started selling schemes with no guarantees, which

relied on continued strong performance of insurance bonds.

"If you're dealing with elderly people, it has got to be safe," he says. "You have got to have guarantees."

Mr Hinton is secretary of the Ship scheme (Safe Home Income Plans), which was formed in 1991 and aims to protect clients from 1980s-style fiascos. Providers who belong to Ship adhere to a code of practice guaranteeing planholders the right to live in the property for life and the freedom to move house. Under the Ship code, a solicitor has to explain the plan to the client.

Most plans are based on one of two basic types:

■ **Home Reversion Plans:** You sell a proportion or all of your house to the financial services provider, but are allowed to live in your home for a token rent - £12 a year with Stalwart Assurance's plan. In return, you receive a lump sum or an annuity. You usually have to be at least 65 to enter the plan.

■ **Mortgage Home Income Plans:** You take out a fixed-rate, interest-only mortgage on your home. The proceeds of that go to buy an annuity which is enough to meet the interest payments and give you an income. When you die, the lender is repaid from the house sale proceeds. This plan is usually limited to £20,000, because a special mortgage-in-

terest tax relief (Miras) concession is only effective up to that level. Unless you are older than 70, you are unlikely to get a good rate from an annuity.

Another option is a shared appreciation mortgage. These allow you to take advantage of the increase in your property's value. You take out an interest-only mortgage on part of your property. The rate may be zero or a low fixed one. When the property is sold, the proceeds are used to repay the loan, and pay a proportion of the increase in value to the lender. Meanwhile, you have the use of the sum borrowed.

Bank of Scotland offers shared appreciation mortgages and Barclays Mortgages is due to start shortly. Age is not a factor with these schemes.

It is not just the childless who might be drawn to the idea of a home income plan. William Townsend, 76, and his wife have three daughters. But the Mr Townsend says he was not worried about them financially, since they are all married and very well off.

He took out a home-reversion income plan with Stalwart Assurance two years ago. "We weren't poor... it was just the case that now and then something happened and we had to do something about it," Mr Townsend said. The couple's home near Cardiff was then valued at around £52,000, and they cur-

rently receive a monthly income of £170. That amount fluctuates according to the latest property valuation.

Home income plans can be useful, but they are often a last resort. "Having assets to transfer to their children is a key concern for all elderly people," says Andrew Swallow, an independent financial adviser. And these plans can be very expensive when you see the scheme as a whole. He suggests an interest-free loan from their children might be a better solution for retired parents.

Once your home is locked away in the scheme, you are duty bound to keep it in reasonable order. "If they send a surveyor around, and he says the roof needs doing, then the roof needs doing," says Mr Swallow.

There are many vital questions to ask about any equity-release scheme. Would increased private income affect any state benefits you receive? Will you have security of tenure for life? What if you want to move house? Who benefits from any appreciation in the value of the property?

"Never look at an HIP in isolation," says Philippa Gee of financial advisers Gee & Company. "Take account of all affairs and get both financial and legal advice first."

Gee & Company: 01743 236952; Andrew Swallow: Professional Financial Planning: 01473 252156; Stalwart Assurance: 01306 876581; Bank of Scotland: 0131 317 6827; Hinton & Wild: 0181-390 8166.



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 framlington



Brown's pension plans fail to add up

NIC CICUTTI

There are limits to what personal finance editors can achieve for their readers. This chastening reflection came to me as I read a report by the National Association of Pension Funds (NAPF) this week on the savings the Government hopes to make by scrapping tax credits on dividends.

Assuming readers will remember that this particular piece of financial jiggery-pokery was announced by Gordon Brown in his July Budget last year, The Treasury calculated that, by means of this tax adjustment, it expected to save the Exchequer some £5bn a year.

This change meant that millions of people with a personal pension would have to put an extra 0.8 per cent of their annual salary, on average, to achieve the income in retirement they had previously expected to get. The same applied also to money-purchase occupational pension schemes, where contributions are invested in a fund which is used to buy an annual income in retirement.

We argued in these pages that the Government's decision was an unfair attack on some types of pensions. It would also have the effect of spurring employers with so-called final-salary schemes, where they guarantee a pension based on years of service, to abandon such excellent schemes in search of cheaper options.

But, hey, it's hard to argue when Mr Brown, the kiddies' best friend (who ever thought of that pre-Budget picture opportunity?), tells us he's going to use the extra £5bn for good works.

Except that he won't be clawing back that much at all.

as the NAPF points out. Shortly after the July announcement, it was realised that scrapping the tax credits meant the "bribes" paid for people to opt out of Serps, the Government's own earnings-related pension scheme, were not enough.

It left as they were, this risked hundreds of thousands of people flooding back into Serps, with dire consequences for the Exchequer. The increased rebate to people who stay out of Serps will now cost an extra £1bn.

Then, local government employers chimed in. They too have to guarantee their staff's final-salary pensions. Unless they get more money, estimated at about £250m a year, they will have to push up our council tax.

It is not yet clear who else is in line with the begging bowl. What is certain is the claimed £5bn tax saving is unlikely ever to materialise.

There are several morals to this story. The first is that this Government can't do its sums properly. The second is that it is only forced to backtrack when faced by public revolt.

Compare and contrast its attitude on this issue with the sharp U-turn it performed over its plans to withdraw tax benefits for PEPs from April 1999, when new-style Individual Savings Accounts come in. Then, a middle-class backlash materialised within days and Gordon caved in.

Finally, it shows up how ineffective the personal finance press can be at times. On this issue, which will cost as many people just as dearly in the long run, the Government has got away with it. For that, I'm sorry.

MONEY MAKEOVER

Taking stock of investment objectives

Names: Joanna and Jean-Jacques Camus
Age: 54 and 57 respectively
Occupations: Programmer and part-time teacher respectively

The Problem: The couple have two simple aims: to fund the college education of their two younger children and to make final preparations for a comfortable retirement. However, they admit their present income just about covers expenditure and they are not saving at present.

The Solution: Given that there is little potential to make further savings, the important thing to do is to look at the Camus' current portfolio, check how this matches with their current objectives and see whether any changes are necessary.

Joanna and Jean-Jacques own their home, presently valued at £250,000, outright. Among their investments is £20,000 in index-linked National Savings certificates, maturing in 2000 and 2002.

They also have £9,000 in a Market Harborough "feeder account" which earns them interest while gradually building up to the annual limit into a tax-exempt special savings account (Tessa) with the building society. This matures in 2002. The couple invested £6,000 into Virgin's "tracker" fund personal equity plan (PEP), which tracks UK's All Share index, in each of the past three tax years. They also have £5,000 in a Britannia Guaranteed Equity Bond, maturing in 2000, plus £9,000 in a Cheltenham & Gloucester postal account. This leaves Joanna somewhat exposed to general UK stock market volatility.

In order to provide a more balanced approach, Joanna may consider mixing her existing index funds with actively managed funds. There would then be potential to invest further afield, such as Europe, and to consider corporate-bond PEPs, which are generally lower risk than equities. A corporate bond PEP is available through

contributes 15 per cent of her income into her scheme.

The adviser: Justin Modray, Independent financial adviser, Chase de Vere Investments, with offices in London, Bath and Leeds. 01225 469371.

The advice: The Camus' have made a good job of organising their finances to date, making good use of tax efficient investments. There are one or two changes that might be advisable.

Cheltenham & Gloucester's postal account currently pays 5.1 per cent gross for instant access. Joanna could consider C&G's 30-day notice postal account, which pays 6.15 per cent gross. To retain direct access, she should consider a transfer to Northern Rock's Save Direct account, with an interest rate currently of 7.8 per cent gross. Longer-term investment is not an option since money is partly earmarked as a gift to Dominic later this year to help with a property purchase.

Market Harborough's Tessa is paying 7.75 per cent gross, which is very competitive, and there is no need to consider switching this investment. National Savings' index-linked certificates are an excellent, no-risk investment, providing tax-free returns over a five-year period over and above inflation. Again, this does not warrant a switch.

The position changes slightly in relation to Joanna's Virgin Growth PEPs, which will have performed very well in the time each investment was made, as the UK stock market has prospered over this time. However, we are a little concerned at the lack of diversity within the PEP portfolio, which leaves Joanna somewhat exposed to general UK stock market volatility.

Again, to provide a more balanced approach, Joanna may consider mixing her existing index funds with actively managed funds. There would then be potential to invest further afield, such as Europe, and to consider corporate-bond PEPs, which are generally lower risk than equities. A corporate bond PEP is available through



Joanna Camus needs to diversify her PEPs. Photograph: Grant Norman

Virgin, although it does not offer actively managed equity funds.

While there are no charges to exit the Virgin PEP, Joanna would need to consider potential initial charges were she to switch to another PEP manager.

The Britannia investment provides capital security with returns linked to the FTSE 100 performance over five years. Our only reservation is that it

again relies upon FTSE 100 share index's performance. This is similar to her PEP portfolio, where most of the All-Share weighting is linked to the top 100 companies, thus lacking diversity within the portfolio. The investment should, however, be held for the full term due to penalties for exiting.

Joanna is sensibly maximising allowable contributions into her occa-

sional pension, so there is no scope for further contributions. She is contemplating the transfer of an earlier retirement annuity contract into the occupational scheme. This will require expert advice to ensure that she makes the correct decision.

Jean-Jacques has some pension provision from previous membership of the same scheme as Joanna's. As a self-employed person, has scope to make contributions via a personal pension. However, this is not viable due to lack of surplus income.

The Camus' aim is to fund college for their children. Given that there is no surplus income, in addition to any grants received, funding will need to come from existing investments.

In the shorter term, they could draw upon any surplus building society holdings. They could then look towards their maturing National Savings, Tessa and GEB in the year 2000. At maturity, appropriate sums could be held in a high-interest deposit account to provide easy access when required. It would be preferable not to touch the PEPs, which will be useful for providing a tax-efficient income in retirement.

The Camus' primary source of retirement income will be their occupational and state pensions. To supplement retirement income, they can then look to their investment portfolio. Given that Joanna, the main earner, may not retire until 65, it is perhaps best to leave their investment portfolio aiming for growth, and review it nearer to retirement.

The Camus' could also consider releasing capital tied up in their property during retirement, potentially moving to a less expensive residence while investing the cash released by doing so to produce extra income.

Given their assets, inheritance tax (IHT) should not be too great a concern. They should ensure they have a will in position, and might consider leaving some of the assets from their estate to the children upon first death.

UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT/LAMBETH BUILDING SOCIETY SIMPLY TESSA

The Product: Lambeth Building Society Simply Tessa

The Deal: The society has decided to join in the Internet revolution by offering one of its Tessa products on the Web.

Savers investing a minimum of £1,800 in Lambeth's product (£9,000 in a follow-on Tessa) will receive a basic rate, cur-

rently 7.95 per cent. In addition, new Tessa will earn a bonus of up to 5 per cent if the total investment, excluding interest, is three-times the first year's investment at maturity after five years. For follow-on Tessas, a bonus of 2.5 per cent on the initial £9,000 investment will be paid.

Lambeth says the rate paid, which could reach 8.37 per cent, is currently the highest available.

Applicants to its website (<http://www.simplypostal.co.uk/app-tessa.htm>) can print out an application form to send back to Lambeth Building Society. Plus Points: Tessa, a tax-free saving product, will disappear

after April 1999, although any

started before then will be allowed to continue. It makes

sense to start one now. It makes

even more sense to obtain the

best possible rate. This is for the moment.

Risk-free this may be, but un-

complicated it certainly isn't.

By offering a bonus after five years, Lambeth is hoping to en-

sure savers stay the full five-year course even if other societies offer more competitive rates in the next 12 months or so. The danger is the society may well

gradually drop rates on the

product, below that of other so-

cieties, before its time is up.

It may still be worth taking a punt, however, as the Tessa can be transferred to another provider without losing its tax-free status, on a £25 penalty.

Marks out of five: Three and a half

Nic Cicutti

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Pearl is offering increased allocation rates of 101 per cent for investments over £20,000 into its Platinum Bond, rising to 102 per cent on sums over £30,000. The with-profits bond adds bonuses daily, which ones added cannot be taken away. Income may be taken monthly, quarterly, six-monthly or annually. Call 0800 221133.

Charles Schwab, the execution-only share-dealing company, is launching a web trading system allowing investors to trade directly in equities on the London stock exchange and US markets. The system will offer real-time share prices plus Reuters news, indices and company historical data. Call 0870 6066655.

Lambeth Building Society is also joining in the internet revolution by offering a tax-exempt special savings account (ressa) paying up to 8.37 per cent on minimum first-year investments of £1,800.

The Tessa includes a 5 per cent bonus on the balance held in the account at the end of the first year, if the total investment is tripled by the time it matures after five years. Website address: www.simplypostal.co.uk/app-ressa.htm.

Mortgage Trust, the home loan lender, is launching a mortgage package for IT contractors which allows borrowers to overpay when in work and take payment holiday when between contracts.

The company says the mortgage, with a variable rate of 8.24 per cent, allows

IT contractors to take advantage of extra income earned sorting out the so-called millennium bug. It also has a capital-raising option of up to £250,000. Call 0800 550551.

Abbey National is also entering the self-employed market by offering two self-certified mortgages to people who may not be able to show two years' accounts. They must have been trading in their current business for the last 24 months.

The standard variable rate is 8.7 per cent. There are no booking or arrangement fees. The loan is available to first-time buyers, new and existing customers, including remortgagors. Capital repayments may be made at any stage. The deal is available through independent brokers.

OHRA UK, the medical insurer, is offering its policy-holders a specially negotiated reduced rate on complete health screenings carried out with Pathology Management Company. The screening service operates discounts of up to 50 per cent off the normal price. Call David Potter on 01703 620620 for exact prices.

Coventry Building Society is launching two mortgages, including a capped rate pegged at 6.2 per cent until 30 June 2001. Coventry also offers a mortgage with a 2.25 per cent cashback, a discount of 0.25 per cent for five years on the current variable rate of 8.7 per cent, plus free valuation, remortgage transfer service and no arrangement fee. Call 0800 126125.

Bradford & Bingley is offering a new package to first-time buyers which includes legal fees, a cashback of up to £1,005, free standard valuations and free accident, unemployment and sickness cover. Call 0800 570800.

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Refund valn

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No high lending fee (MP)

No high lending fee

Refund valn fee

The best offers on the table

Unfortunately, past performance is often the only guide to future prospects. David Prosser reports

The cardinal rule of investment is that past performance is no guide to the future. In other words, just because a particular fund has done well in the past, there's no guarantee that it will do well from now on. Let's face it though. No one's going to invest in a unit trust without taking at least a peek at its track record so far.

So, past performance does matter. Not least, a unit trust's track record matters because it's the only tangible guide that you have to its quality. The key to reading performance figures is to understand that they present nothing more than a snapshot of how a fund has done over a specific period – over other time frames, its performance may be very different.

In order to get the most from unit trust performance tables, you need to look at a fund's record over several time periods. Longer periods are particularly important. It's comparatively easy to produce six months of outstanding results, repeating the trick over five years is much harder. It also pays to study consistency of performance. What you want is a respectable series of returns rather than one brilliant year followed by several mediocre results.

Over the longer term, the solid but not so spectacular unit trusts will steadily rise to the top of the pile.

The performance tables on page 7 show the 10 best and 10 worst unit trusts over the last five years. What's noticeable about performance tables over one, five and 10 years is that they include a proliferation of funds from similar sectors. This reflects the fact that unit trusts are, to an extent, slaves to the stock markets in which they invest.

All the worst funds, for example, are unit trusts which invest in Japan and the Far East. This is a result of the crash in Far Eastern stock markets over the last year and the bear market which has plagued Japan much of the 1990s.

Equally, nearly all of the best unit trusts over one and five years invested in Europe or North America. As these were the best performing stock markets in the world over those time periods, this is hardly very surprising.

Over 10 years, however, the top 10 unit trusts are a more diverse bunch. Foreign & Colonial, Hill Samuel and Henderson have all done well with their smaller

company investments here or in the US, for instance. Framlington and Aberdeen have profited from sound investments in health and technology stocks respectively.

The league tables also offer another useful lesson. "Don't presume the big names are the best unit trust managers," counsels Jonathan Fry of Premier Investment Management. While there are several big names among these top performers, including Gartmore, Jupiter, Schroder and Henderson, smaller management groups such as Aberdeen, Exeter, Newton, GA and Old Mutual are also well represented.

It's crucial, therefore, not to simply invest in the unit trusts which are at the top of the league tables today. In addition to these, there are plenty of other funds which have performed well. You need to decide where you want to invest your money and which risk you are prepared to take.

Picking a unit trust involves looking at performance tables, of course. But, says Emma Weiss of the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds: "Ultimately, it's a matter of what money you have available and which fund suits your particular circumstances."

Formerly, have all done consistently well over the last five years or so.

Similarly, in the international unit trust sector, Save & Prosper Financial, Aberdeen Prolific Technology, Henderson Global Technology and Framlington Financial have all been consistently successful performers.

It's crucial, therefore, not to simply invest in the unit trusts which are at the top of the league tables today. In addition to these, there are plenty of other funds which have performed well. You need to decide where you want to invest your money and which risk you are prepared to take.

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David Prosser is features editor of 'Investors' Chronicle'.



Finding a balance between risks and rewards

Don't chose a unit trust that leaves you feeling overexposed. Abigail Montrose explains how

So you want to invest in the stock market – but which fund to choose? Your choice of investment will very much depend on any existing savings and investments you have, your objectives and your time scale. Once these have been established, the next question is what is your attitude to risk.

Are you the cautious type or are you prepared to take a higher risk in the search for potentially greater rewards? Assuming you are not totally risk averse, you need to consider just how much risk you are prepared to take.

Unit trusts are generally regarded as medium-risk investments. No risk and low-risk investments include National Savings, gilts and bank and building society deposit accounts. Dealing with equities, where share prices can go down as well as up, means risking your capital. Unit trusts, with their ready-made portfolios, reduce the gamble with shares. But the amount of risk associated with an individual unit trust will depend on how it invests its funds.

Fiona Price, who is managing director of the all-women firm of independent financial advisers Fiona Price & Partners, divides unit trust funds into four layers:

■ At the bottom, the most risk-averse funds are those which invest in cash and fixed-interest funds such as gilts, corporate bonds and preference shares. These assets should either pay interest or a fixed-rate of return.

■ The next level is medium risk and includes fund of funds and managed unit trusts; well-diversified general international funds; UK equity and UK equity income trusts. These invest across a wide range of industries and so should achieve a high level of diversity, spreading your risk further.

■ Above these are higher-risk funds such as those which invest in just one sector of the market, such as smaller companies, or just one particular geographical market, such as Europe, America or the Far East. As soon as you start investing in overseas markets you bring in the added risk of currency movements.

■ At the top are high-risk funds. This includes specialists such as those which invest in emerging markets where fortunes can change overnight, as we have all so recently seen.

Most fund managers will tell you

where they see each of their funds on the risk spectrum.

"It is also worth bearing in mind that the risk profiles of funds within the same sector are not identical," says Ms Price. "For instance, in going for a medium-risk sector such as 'international' you will not only find trusts that invest in a broad geographical range of international shares, but trusts which specialise in, say, healthcare or technology companies throughout the world.

"There are two ways of matching your preferred degree of risk to that of your investments – either you can select trusts that are all in the same risk bracket, or you can opt for a portfolio which contains different risk elements which, on balance, give you your preferred risk profile," she says.

One measurement of risk often mentioned is volatility. Within a sector, some funds will be more volatile than others, points out Sarah Cornthwaite, spokeswoman for the performance measurement group, Reuters Funds Information. "A volatile fund is one that may shoot up in performance terms today but then it might plummet tomorrow," she says.

The more volatile a fund, the more you can expect its price to go up and down. Volatile funds can therefore present good buying opportunities if you manage to buy on a day when the price is low and sell when the price soars. So good timing is even more important with these funds.

Volatility figures, which are being increasingly looked at by financial advisers, are worked out by looking at the average performance of a fund over a set period and seeing how smoothly that performance was achieved or if the returns or losses came in fits and starts. Volatility figures are published in some of the specialist financial magazines such as *Money Management*. A high volatility figure means you can expect a roller-coaster ride with the fund.

You, or rather your adviser if you have one, should always compare a fund's volatility figure with other funds in its sector, as clearly some sectors are likely to be more volatile than others. Funds which invest in emerging markets, for example, are likely to be very volatile as shares in these countries can literally double or half overnight. The more volatile funds are not for the fainthearted.

What to look for when choosing a unit trust

- The reputation of the management group
- Decide your investment aim – be it long-term growth, rising income or combination of both.
- The degree of risk you are prepared to take – don't invest in emerging markets, for example, unless you are prepared for large swings in the unit price.
- Past performance – look at the long-term as well as annual performance.
- Look for a fund consistently in the top 25 per cent of its sector.
- Determine how much performance depends on the efforts of an individual fund manager, who could move to a dif-
- ferent group. Or do you prefer a fund run by a team of managers?
- All unit trust prices go up and down as market change but look at a fund's volatility – does its price go up and down more than its rivals
- Charges – make sure you don't pay too much.
- Can it be put into a personal equity plan (PEP) or Individual Savings Account (ISA)? You might as well take advantage of the generous tax treatment of PEPs while you can.
- If still bewildered by the wide choice, ask an independent financial adviser for help.

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Shop around for the good deals

The number of ways to invest in a unit trust is growing fast. Tony Bonsignore looks at the options available

Investing in a unit trust has never been easier. There are now more than 1,600 unit trusts available to UK investors, and the number is growing almost weekly. And, as the competition has increased, so has the ease with which you can make your investment.

Investing in a unit trust these days can be as easy as opening a new bank or building society deposit account, with providers deliberately keeping paperwork to a minimum. The problem is choosing exactly how much to invest, which trust to invest in and whom to buy it from.

Many people will decide to invest a lump sum in a unit trust. Recent years have seen the minimum investment in a unit trust get gradually lower, and many will now accept anything from £500 upwards, with the option to make subsequent top-ups as and when you can. Before you invest, though, be sure to look at the effect charges might have on your money. Your "key features" docu-

ment, which providers are obliged to provide to you, will list all the relevant details.

If you do not have a large lump sum to invest, it is still possible to get in on the scheme through a regular savings option, which is available from as little as £25 every month. Most big providers now offer this option. All an investor needs to do is set up a direct debit to make sure the provider gets the minimum investment every month although, again, additional payments are usually welcome.

As well as avoiding the need for a sizeable lump sum, this option also allows cautious investors to avoid unnecessary risk. For instance, if you invest a huge lump sum on day one, and on day two the market unexpectedly crashes, you have immediately lost a significant portion of your investment. With a regular savings option, however, less of your money is at risk from day one.

Whether you choose lump sum or regular savings, you will also need to decide whether it is worth putting it in a personal equity plan (PEP) wrapper. If you have not already used your 1998/99 allowance, then the answer will almost certainly be yes, as it allows you to receive your returns free of income and capital-gains tax. Although PEPs are set to be replaced by the Individual Savings Account in April 1999, the Government has

already reassured investors that PEP investments will enjoy their tax-free status after next year's deadline. If you want to go on investing after then, you can do so in ISA.

Look out, however, as not all unit trust providers offer PEPs – some choose to only offer plain vanilla unit trusts. But the fact that a fund manager may not offer a PEP wrapper is no reason to dismiss their unit trusts. Although a PEP is a valuable tax break for many investors, it can mean little if you are in a poorly performing trust. On the flip side, a good performing unit trust may offer you a return that is far better than you might otherwise have enjoyed.

The other equally important factor to consider when choosing to invest in a unit trust is who to buy it from. As the number of trusts available has mushroomed in recent years, so has the number of outlets that sell them. You can now buy a unit trust face to face, over the phone or through responding to a newspaper advertisement, and with or without advice.

Most people who are unsure of what they are doing usually choose to have some advice. Financial advisers come in two forms – tied or independent. Most of the advisers in bank branches are tied, and so are only allowed to advise you on their own particular products. Most

have pretty comprehensive unit trust ranges, but be careful to check out a trust's past performance before you commit yourself to buying anything.

An independent financial adviser, meanwhile, is obliged to look at the entire range of unit trusts and other investments on offer and recommend the one best suited to you. This route can prove a little more expensive, but can be worth it in the long run, especially if your overall financial affairs need putting in order. IFA Promotion (01179711177) can give

you list of independent advisers in your local area.

The other option is to buy direct without any advice. This can be done over the phone, such as with Virgin Direct, or by simply going into your bank and building society, picking up the relevant form and then returning it with a cheque. Marks & Spencer also now has dedicated financial services call-in centres at many of their high street stores. Doing it this way can sometimes, but not always, be cheaper.

One cheap way of buying a unit

trust direct is through one of the many discount brokers. These regularly advertise and include firms such as PepDirect and Chase de Vere. These have deals with all the large investment groups that allow them to sell their investments more cheaply. Many unit trusts include in their initial charges a 3 per cent commission fee paid to financial advisers who sell their products. In effect, the discount broker returns most, if not all, of their commission to the customer.

So, however much you want to

invest, there is a way to buy a unit trust. But do remember that, as with all investments, unit trusts should be considered as long-term holdings. Don't choose to put your money into one if you are going to need to cash it in quickly. Prices can yo-yo on a daily basis. While there have been some exceptional periods, such as the past couple of years, it is only over five years or longer that you begin to see really worthwhile gains.

Tony Bonsignore is a journalist at Financial Adviser.



Photograph: Loughran, Cath

The problem with green investors

Can you wear your heart on your investment portfolio? Up to a point. The market for ethical investing through unit trusts has never been more popular.

The amount invested in ethical investment and unit trusts more than doubled in the last three years, and now stands at £1.6bn. This year, three new trusts have joined the list of investment vehicles claiming "ethical" status, including the first such fund from Standard Life.

Investors' most common objections in the past have been to funds investing in companies manufacturing weapons or cigarettes, using animals for testing or having facilities in or exporting to political regimes that are considered objectionable – just think back to the anti-apartheid movement in relation to South Africa.

Nowadays, this has broadened out to include active support for companies espousing good environmental practices, or to exclude those that make political donations or have a record of pollution.

But being ethical is one thing, how have these funds performed? Their recent history has been mixed: performing very well at first, but in the last two or three years they have fallen behind the pack. (See table.)

In the past, managers of ethical and ecological funds claimed their funds should do better than ordinary ones and often said that "an ethically run company is a well-run company". They believed that because ethical funds have to look closely at companies – to filter out those that may be offensive to some – they had a better idea of how successful the companies might be.

A key to recent poor performance lies in the fact that ethical funds have less choice of investments than ordinary funds because of their selection criteria. These may exclude up to three-quarters of the London-listed companies, depending on how strict the fund is.

Most blue-chip companies

Richard Shackleton considers whether ethical funds appeal to the heart more than the head

Investors who want a clear conscience could find themselves investing in funds with strong "negative" criteria. Almost all the ethical unit trusts screen companies and exclude those involved in activities ranging from alcohol production to arms manufacturing, animal testing and gambling.

In addition, green funds mostly exclude polluting companies, or those involved in nuclear power or the fur trade. This can lead to bizarre consequences. British Telecom, for instance, is excluded by many funds because it owns a cable company that runs a pornographic television channel – although it contributes almost nothing to BT's overall earnings.

Some funds manage to include such companies by setting upper limits on the amount of income derived from certain activities. Crédit Suisse, the second-best performer, excludes companies earning more than 10 per cent from alcohol or tobacco – which allows it to invest in Marks & Spencer which sells alcohol in its food halls.

A different tack is being used increasingly to promote ethical and green funds: "positive" screening, instead of simply ignoring "bad" companies and picking from the rest. Positive managers look for those contributing to clearing up pollution or improving health. Friends Provident, the oldest and largest ethical fund, (which also failed to make the top five) looks favourably on companies supplying such basic necessities as food and water, or quality public transport or medicines. It also prefers those which have good employment practices and community involvement.

The Independent has produced a free "Guide to Ethical Finances", written by its personal finance editor, Nic Cicconi. The guide, sponsored by Friends Provident, covers ethical investment, retirement planning, banking and buying a home. Call 0800 214487 or fill in the coupon on page 4.

are excluded on one ground or another because of the range of their business. Top unit trust performance in the last couple of years has been dominated by investment in leading financial, pharmaceutical and energy stocks, at home and in the USA – all blue chips and most outside the range of ethical funds. This leaves them stock picking from mainly small companies, which have underperformed for the past two years.

It is an issue at the heart of ethical investment: to what extent is shareholder value sacrificed in order to secure maximum adherence to ethical criteria? The best performer over a three-year period is Franklin Health, a "sector" fund which qualifies as an ecological one only because it specialises in healthcare. Analysts point out that this is a sector where takeover activity has been frenetic, driving underlying stock prices sharply higher.

Among the other big players in the ethical field, NPI, which has fewer exclusions than most, failed to make it into the top five.

Unit trusts – the best and worst performers

Best unit trusts over five years

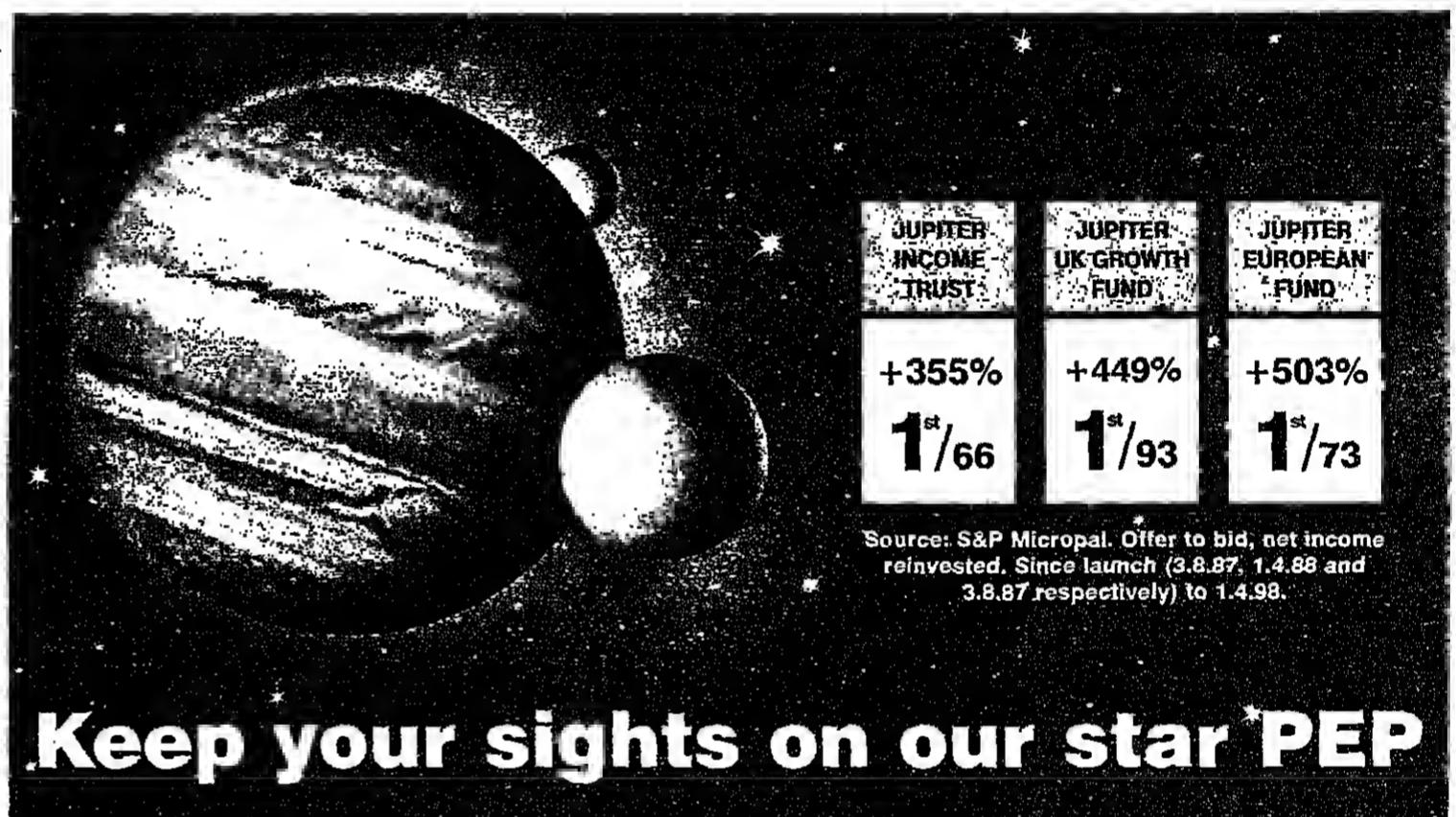
Fund	Return*	Fund	Return*
Investec European Growth	£4,793	Franklin Franklin Japanese Smaller Cos	£579
Gamma European Select Opportunities	£3,692	Invesco Japan Smaller Cos	£576
Exeter Capital Growth	£3,502	Save & Prosper Japan Smaller Cos	£575
Old Mutual European	£3,567	M&G Japan	£565
Jupiter European	£3,445	Edinburgh Japan Smaller Cos	£563
GA North America Growth	£3,478	Schroder Japan Smaller Cos	£553
Transatlantic European Select Growth	£3,450	Barings Japan Smaller Cos	£552
Baring Europe Select	£3,410	Fidelity Japan Smaller Cos	£534
Alpha European Smaller Cos	£3,381	Henderson Japan Smaller Cos	£521
Royal & Sun Alliance N America	£3,283	Save & Prosper Korea	£500

*Value of £1,000 invested on 31/03/87, 31/03/92 and 31/03/97 at 31/03/98. Bid to bid, net income reinvested.

Worst unit trusts over five years

Fund	Return*
Franklin Franklin Japanese Smaller Cos	£579
Invesco Japan Smaller Cos	£576
Save & Prosper Japan Smaller Cos	£575
M&G Japan	£565
Edinburgh Japan Smaller Cos	£563
Schroder Japan Smaller Cos	£553
Barings Japan Smaller Cos	£552
Fidelity Japan Smaller Cos	£534
Henderson Japan Smaller Cos	£521
Save & Prosper Korea	£500

Source: HSW



Sources: S&P Micropal. Offer to bid; net income reinvested. Since launch (3.8.87, 1.4.88 and 3.8.87 respectively) to 1.4.98.

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The wise guy's BMW

Road test Saab 9-3, by Roger Bell

Saab's success in Britain rides on BMW's, according to one school of thought. Aspirational cars, BMWs. They are well-made, dynamically strong and rewarding to drive. Trouble is, down-range ones have become two-a-penny. That BMW sold more best-in-class 3-series models here last year than VW sold Golfs underlines just how commonplace they are.

Does it matter? Not a jot, in a rational world, but then many car-buying decisions are far from rational. The popularity of the 3-series may, for the image-conscious, be reason enough to reject it. There are, after all, several worthy alternatives, among them Saab's new 9-3, which purports to rival the BMW on merit, and beat it on exclusivity and price.

Saab sold nearly 17,000 cars in Britain last year (against BMW's 64,000), the bulk of them Mondeo-sized 900s. Even though that has been the bedrock of Saab's slow recovery, the safe and solid 900 set no benchmarks. Now, however, it has

been supplanted by the 9-3 (Saab, like Volvo, seems bent on confusing us with number tags), which is said to embrace more than a thousand improvements. Although you'd be hard-pressed to spot five of them from the outside - the most obvious is a new corporate grille - the 9-3 is a big step forward. It may even get GM-owned Saab back into the black after years of unprofitability.

Changes common to all models include softer, more resilient suspension, sharper steering for keener handling and wider tyres for extra grip. There's also more safety equipment, including Saab's ingenious anti-theft system and improvements to a fascia that now carries a bespoke radio, useless elsewhere. Standard equipment has been improved, too: most models get air-conditioning.

As before, there are three body styles - five-door hatch, three-door hatch (euphemistically called a coupé) and a convertible, hitherto the best-selling soft-top in its class, much to the chagrin of Audi and BMW. Petrol engines - 2.0, 2.3 and 2.0 turbo - are as before. Both the 2.0s I drove impressed with their refinement, engine balancer shafts smoothing away vibration.

New to the range - new to Saab, in fact - is an advanced 2.2 turbocharged diesel with direct injection, 16 valves and a cat-cleaned exhaust. Although gruffer and harsher than the petrol versions, the diesel is easy on the ears, impressively lively - mid-range acceleration is excellent - and frugal. Sadly for Saab, one-step-ahead BMW has a new four-cylinder 2.0 diesel that is even more

powerful, economical and refined. I quite liked these new Saabs (prices range from £16,500 to £29,800 before extras). They are quiet, well made, nicely furnished (particularly the up-range ones) and relaxing. They ride smoothly and corner securely, though spirited driving betrays lamentably poor side support. Another gripe is that the steering of the 143mph 2.0 turbo tugs aggressively under power.

Although they are pleasant enough to drive - sharp steering, a nifty gear change and crisp switchgear stand out - the 9-3s do not beguile or entertain to the same degree as some rivals. Alfa's new 156 is a better driver's car. So is the new 3-series BMW, which looks set to maintain its advantage over the Saab's much-improved middleweight.

Saab 9-3 2.0i
Five-door, £16,995-20,745.
Engine: 1985cc, four cylinders,
16 valves, 130bhp at 6,100rpm.
Transmission: 5-speed gearbox
(auto extra), front-wheel drive.
Performance: top speed
124mph, 0-60mph in 10.6
seconds, consumption 28.5mpg.
Rivals

Alfa Romeo 156 2.0 four-door, from £29,730. Head-turning looks, terrific driver appeal, lovely cabin, great character. Best-value model is £17,573 1.8; fastest, 142mph V6.
Audi 100 1.8 four-door, £19,016. Pricey, but classy. Turbocharged diesel also a cracker.
BMW 318i, from £18,265. Prestige name, build quality and driver appeal.

Ford Mondeo 2.0 Ghia, £17,495. Well specified Ghia loaded with equipment that costs extra elsewhere. Best-value model is up-range 1.8.



GAVIN
GREEN

We may have *Watchdog*, *Which?* magazine and *What Car?*, but that's nothing compared with the consumer advice offered to punters on the other side of the Atlantic. In America, nanny-knows-best advice has got to the point where consumer reporters allegedly wear bonnets, nightgowns and slippers, and go to sleep with the aid of a hot Horlicks.

On a recent trip to the US, I picked up a copy of *Consumer Reports* magazine, published by the Consumer's Union. It was their annual "auto issue" and had more factual information on cars than any single magazine I've ever seen over here. *What Car?* is full of road tests and prices. *Watchdog* occasionally rubbishes products (such as its recent, and it transpires, misguided, lambasting of the Ford Mondeo) and *Which?* has an engaging amateurism about it, but the US consumer magaz gives solid facts on complicated issues. Want to know which car fares best in crash tests and injury claim rates? It's all there.

In Britain, of course, cars are occasionally smashed into concrete blocks in the interests of consumer knowledge. But the tests are infrequent, and usually just test a small batch of cars. If you, the punter, want to know whether a Toyota Corolla is safer than a Ford Escort, it's almost impossible to tell.

The big US consumer groups, on the other hand, will tell you how cars fare in front and offset crashes, in side impacts, and in injury claim rates. They can do this because government-backed bodies crash test most cars on sale, and make the findings public. They'll also tell you about reliability, performance, dimensions, depreciation and, in all probability, whether the glove box of an Escort is bigger or smaller than a Corolla's. Add the hugely thorough JD Power customer satisfaction findings and, in America, prospective car buyers can read so much about the various new cars on offer that by the time they've finally made their choice, the car will probably no longer be in production.

US consumer groups also have huge power. Cars have even been kicked out of production by consumer champions. The Chevrolet Corvair was felled by Ralph Nader through he, like many ageing nannies, subsequently complained so much that nobody now pays him any attention.

Sifting through the latest consumer tests on the 1988 models doesn't make uplifting reading, but there's no doubt its usefulness. Obviously, only cars available in the US are tested, which spares Rover, Fiat, Renault, Peugeot, Citroën and Alfa Romeo any embarrassment. All have now deserted the US market, because nobody bought their cars.

Cars commanded for their front-crash protection include the Audi A4, the Ford Mondeo (called the Contour in the US), the Honda CRV, the Jeep Wrangler and the Volvo S70/V70. None do brilliantly in the side-impact tests; the Hyundai Sonata is rated as "severe or fatal injury certain", which should give Sonata drivers something to think about when next they cross busy junctions. (The test itself involves a car travelling at 17mph being hit in the side by a car doing 34mph). The BMW 5-series and Volvo S70/V70 offer "good" front offset crash protection.

The injury claim rate figures give an idea of how often occupants are injured in crashes. Star cars include the Chrysler Grand Voyager MPV (Tony Blair's new family car, incidentally), Honda Integra, BMW 7-series, Mercedes S-class (the son of car in which Princess Diana was killed), Lexus LS400 and Volkswagen Golf. Apart from the Golf and the Honda, they're all big, luxury cars, which confirms the notion that the bigger the car, the safer.

Cars that have "much worse than average" injury claim rates include the Nissan SX coupe, the little Suzuki Jeeps, the Toyota RAV4, the Hyundai Sonata (again) and the Hyundai Accent.

Crash tests are an imperfect way of testing safety, for the simple reason that no two accidents are the same. But at least they give us a clue. In Britain, although things are improving, we still buy safety mainly on manufacturers' reputations and salesmanship.

Nanny may be a pain in the neck at times. But just occasionally she has something sensible to say.

If you can mend it with string, India will buy it

James May investigates the realities of marketing cars for India's new middle-class

In the days of Empire it was the built Japanese 125cc bikes into something four-wheeled.

And yet - my recent visit there to examine the work of Ford, Mercedes-Benz and India's domestic manufacturer, Maruti-Suzuki, suggests that, rather like Hinduism, the whole business is much more complicated than at first appears.

Manufacturers tend to divide their empire-building ambitions into short, medium and long-term projects. Short-term goals are being satisfied by South America, particularly Brazil.

In the long run, most makers are keeping an eye on China, a potential market place of unimaginable - some would say catastrophic - proportions.

That leaves, in the all-important medium term, India - which, after some 45 years in a state-controlled economic wilderness, dispensed with trade barriers in 1985 and embraced classic free-market structures.

On the face of it, the appeal of the Indian market is as immense as the country itself. It has a population of almost 1 billion, of which you need attract only 0.1 per cent to have 1 million customers. India has a burgeoning middle class, and Indians are keen to step from their Bajaj scooters and licence



Deceptive Benz: the Mercedes factory at Pune
Photograph: Stephen Lovell-Davis

this thinking," says Dr Til Becker, head of Mercedes-Benz India.

The most expensive Indian-built car is the Mercedes E-class at almost £40,000. The next most expensive are the Ford Escort and Vauxhall Astra, both at around £18,000. Less than 2 per cent of Indians pay income tax; those who do are rich enough to buy the Mercedes; those who don't are wary of advertising their wealth.

Then there are the demands that India makes on a car - which is why the Indian Escort,

and the forthcoming Indian Fiesta, have beefed-up suspension and raised ride height.

The roads infrastructure is simply decades behind new vehicle technology. "Cars must come first, roads later," says Vineet Ohri, of the Ministry of Industry. That's what happened in the West, of course - the growing popularity of the car pushing and paying for road-building. In India the process is happening much faster, but on rough roads the appeal of the simple, leaf-sprung and easily repairable Hindustan Am-

bassador (aka 1948 Morris Oxford, built in India in the Fifties) is hard to beat.

Manufacturers going into India are ignoring the lessons of their own history. Poor countries have always been mobilised by

simple, cheap, readily maintained cars - which brings us to Maruti - or more properly Maruti-Suzuki, a joint venture set up between the Japanese company and the Indian government in 1983. Maruti's best seller is the 800, an absolute bargain at around £3,000 before local taxes. It can also be mended with a brick and a piece of string, and the spares and back-up network is extensive.

You can criticise the car, but you can't knock the philosophy. While other manufacturers grapple with the tenuous new market, Maruti can offer statistics to make them weep: a factory running at 135 per cent capacity, and 82 per cent of the domestic market. This has been achieved with "the Bee of India" - a true people's car.

MOTORING

MY WORST CAR: GARY BUSHELL'S SINGER CHAMOIS

I LOVE cars, especially when someone else is driving. I recently test drove a Porsche Boxster at Brands Hatch. The only bummer was they wouldn't let me max it, it was hot. Which is not a compliment I could pay the worst car I ever owned, a very battered, white Singer Chamois. I had it when I was 18, which was 24 years ago, and it was ancient then. It was so old it was insured against fire, theft and Viking raids.

The difference between it and a golf ball was that you can drive a golf ball 200 yards without a problem. I bought it from my father-in-law for about £100. It was worth more in scrap. But I had to have it before my daughter was born to ferry my wife to and from hospital. It served that purpose, but then everything seemed to go wrong with it. The clutch went, then the indicators. There was trouble with the gearbox, loads of rust. Honestly, it was a nightmare.

My worst driving incident came on the A102. Driving south from the Blackwall Tunnel, I took the Blackheath turn-off. However, a car on my nearside swerved out in front of me while the car on my offside was overtaking. I could only avoid hitting one of them by driving up the kerb. That meant I smashed into a tarmac post. I was unscathed, but the car was an absolute write-off.



I replaced the wreckage of that Singer with a Ford Granada which was followed by a white Jaguar 3.6 which I bought after I joined The Sun in 1985. That car got me into a few scrapes.

Probably the most embarrassing incident was when I toured the country with a very hyped band in the mid-80s. I think I had better draw a discreet veil over an incident on the back seat involving a female journalist from Record Mirror and a member of Siouxsie and the Banshees.

These experiences haven't put me off

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Learn to be a cat burglar

Child labour is against the law, but the law doesn't carry much weight when the boss is a burglar. Robert Liebman discovers

When Julia Falk and Andrew Arnold bought their Victorian three-bedroom terraced house in south London nearly two years ago, it seemed secure enough. The previous owners had installed three locks in the front door, and all of the windows had window locks.

Nevertheless, "we wanted it to be as secure as it could possibly be, so we made an appointment with a Crime Prevention Officer," says Julia, an account manager in public relations with London-based Property Marketing Company. A phone call to her local constabulary was all it took for a free home consultation.

Their front-door locks passed inspection. Simple old-fashioned locks can be opened with an ordinary credit or store-loyalty card. Good-quality five-pin and seven-pin locks can be opened only with a key and are made of drill-resistant metal. However, "the CPO recommended that we insert a bolt on the other side of the door, where the hinges are," says Julia. He explained that this bolt prevents robbers from breaking the door off on the hinge side.

Window locks by themselves don't necessarily suffice. Some types are better than others, and some windows need more than one. "He said that burglars still use children to get into small spaces. It's like *Olivier Twist*."

Burglar alarms are also not created equal. "With some alarms the burglar can just cut the wires and the alarm will stop ringing. He recommended a type which continues to ring even if the wires are cut," says Julia.

If you are considering installing an alarm, get advice from your insurers first, before buying one. Many insurance companies insist that the installation of alarms

is carried out by registered companies. This piece of information is authoritative, coming as it does from the Association of British Insurers, who are doing their anti-crime bit with a "Beat the Burglar" brochure.

In addition to explaining the difference between good locks and the not-so-good variety, the brochure notes that "locks and bolts are only as strong as the door and the frame to which they are fitted. So check the woodwork and replace if it is at all weak or rotten."

Where do most burglaries occur? "Through windows," claims the brochure.

And, betraying its insurance orientation, it reminds us to "take photographs or videos of items such as jewellery and keep them with your policy. You will have a better chance of getting your property back after a burglar." Photos also help when you make a claim.

If burglars use little tricks, so too do crime prevention officers. Five years ago in another part of south London, first-time buyer Richard wanted his new house to have every advantage from day one, so he too made an appointment for a CPO visit.

"I opened the door but he immediately told me to shut it again. I stood there wondering what was going on when suddenly I could see the entire bottom half of the door moving inwards," Richard says. He joined the CPO in front of the house. "He did it again. He just pushed with his knee and the bottom part of the door folded inwards, like cardboard." The door needed a deadbolt lock anyway, a lock which is usually locked from inside and can be opened only with a key. The knee demonstration indicated precisely where the deadbolt should be positioned.

"I was in the palms of his hands after that little demonstration," says Richard. "In retrospect, I realised that that was probably why he did it. It was very persuasive."

Richard's CPO mentioned nothing about undrugged pint-sized accomplices, but he did recommend window locks for all downstairs windows, including one which seemed barely wide enough to admit an alleycat. After the knee-in-the-door trick, the entertainment continued with the CPO explaining the *modus operandi* of the local criminal underworld, conducting Richard through a tour of crime in his neighbourhood generally. "He compared upstairs and downstairs windows, and explained why burglars like some areas better than others. It was fascinating as well as informative," Richard recalls.

"I wanted tall hedges for privacy," he says, "but he explained that the same privacy enables burglars to work undetected." Hedges and walls provide hiding places for robbers as well as robbers.

Burglar alarms and approved window locks start paying for themselves via discounts on insurance premiums.

For locks on seven windows and various other door locks and devices, Richard was nearly £200 out of pocket. "I'm not entirely free from worry now," says Richard, who feels that a really determined or desperate burglar will defeat his level of protection, and almost any reasonable level.

"I know I've done my reasonable best. The money was worth it, just for that peace of mind."

Association of British Insurers, 0171 600 3333; Property Marketing Company, 0171 591 5700.



Free entrance: most burglaries occur through windows, which are especially vulnerable

Photograph: Claire Dickson/Rex

Out of the wilderness

A huge garden can be a mixed blessing.

Fiona Bradhorst gets some tips from the experts on how to make it look its best

From being "sad people who watch gardening programmes" to the owners of a state-of-the-art back yard took the Neesam family a mere two weeks. The results of being "made over" by the BBC's *Home Front in the Garden* series brought instant life to the larger-than-average scruffy family garden. If you're an avid watcher of the tidal wave of home interest shows, you'll remember its transformation, if only for the 40ft sail and riotously colourful curved wall.

Very large gardens can suffer from neglect, because their owners don't know where to start. Some "fill a space" with a swimming pool. But us one Kent estate agent remarks, pools don't necessarily sell a house, and not everyone wants the extra expenses incurred for its upkeep. "It's

also a big safety worry for children." In spite of completely ignoring the Neesams' colour preferences, the BBC makeover team did take on board their needs - somewhere safe for their four children (aged from 18 months to eight years) to play and a place for adults to sit and eat with friends. "We never envisaged anything like the results we got," says Juli Neesam. "The decking area, made from reclaimed railway sleepers and the existing metal staircase to the garden, is brilliant. Our toddler's been out there all winter."

Some of the creations, however, fell on fallow ground. Presenter Anne McEvitt's watering can waterfall has gone. "It was a lovely idea to introduce water, though," insists Juli, "we plan to make the area into a hog garden with carnivorous plants." And the sail "completely serving its purpose" hiding their view of the unattractive builder's yard at the back has been removed, temporarily, due to the recent high winds. "The clinking noise drove us mad at night."

Ms McEvitt stresses that a large garden needs to be broken down into different sections. "Look upon it as extra space outdoors, and consider the

various people who are going to use it: places for children and adults as well as combined areas." Low maintenance is top of her list. She's happy to admit she knows nothing about gardening, but claims it's a bonus. "I want to know how to do things without being Alan Titchmarsh."

Gretie and Ove Andreesen view the third of an acre that surrounds their sprawling bungalow as an extension of their home. The kitchen overlooks a circular patio through a seven metre glass wall. "We bought some cheap, low-voltage outdoor up-lights and spotlights in Florida last year so we can enjoy the garden by night," says Gretie.

The Andreesens had plans drawn up for the garden and intend to complete one big project every year. It is sectioned to include raised vegetable beds with gravel paths between: a young orchard with apple, pear, plum and cherry trees; a harked-over play area with a climbing frame for their three sons and a wild flower meadow.

They open the garden to their neighbours in the small Lincolnshire village once a year. The star of the show has to be the octagonal aviary home to parakeets, budgerigars and

a family of chipmunks. "It wasn't part of the original plans at all," says Gretie, "but it's bang in the middle of the garden and fits in so well."

Andree Battersby, a freelance landscape architect, has plenty of tips for owners of large unruly gardens. "Live with it for a while and get to know it through the seasons, taking photographs, so you know its features good and bad. Make a plan covering a five-year period and work on it area by area as your budget allows."

Andree Battersby is a great supporter of trees. "You can plant a small wood in around three metres. Choose species like willow, birch, cherry and alder, that can be easily coppiced if they grow too large, and plant a carpet of bulbs and spreading perennials such as sweet woodruff, foxgloves and wood anemones."

Penny Henrion's garden has a sense of the countryside, even though it's on the edge of a large town in Berkshire, and the sounds of the nearby major road and rail links are a constant buzz. Hellebores, bluebells, wild violets and primroses are just some of the natural inhabitants of the 150ft garden. "When we moved in seven years ago, it was

like a neglected woodland," remembers Penny.

"It's been a lot of hard work and we curse it sometimes, but we make the most of it all the year round."

Penny, a Buddhist, recently uncovered a brick path in the undergrowth. "It's exactly the length of a meditation path - 20 paces," she says.

While some of us yearn for just 100ft of garden to care for lovingly, Sheila Bryant has 300ft of grass to play with behind her Thirties semi in a suburban cul-de-sac in Hertfordshire. She finds mowing the extensive lawns, wisely sectioned off to create more interest, therapeutic and her advice to budding big gardeners is simply to invest in a good mower.

Anne McEvitt is running workshops on breaking garden rules at the BBC Good Homes Show at Birmingham's NEC. She believes it's not part of the British culture to experiment in the garden. However, the last series of *Home Front in the Garden* pulled twice as many viewers as *Gardener's World*. I get the feeling that our back yards, whatever their size, will never be the same again.

Andree Battersby 0181-693 6413; BBC Good Homes Show 0121-767 4711.



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Hot nights in the garden

It may not be the Med, but you can still enjoy the outdoors with some inspired foreign ideas, says Rosalind Russell

Selling garden and terrace furniture has become a massive business, covering everything from plush padded swing chairs to Beam-Me-Up-Scooty gas-fired barbecues with knobs on. But some of the best ideas come from abroad and – even better – suit our unpredictable climate perfectly.

The Chimenea is a hand-made, kiln-fired Mexican wood-burning stove, recently launched at the Ideal Home Exhibition. The Hertfordshire company importing them plans to sell them through garden centres and small shops selling unusual furniture. They are not designed for cooking on, but to provide heat on cool evenings after the barbecue is over.

Says the firm's David Owen: "When it gets a bit chilly, usually people start drifting in, doing the washing up and it ruins the party.



Indian magic: Stiffkey Lampshop's Star Lantern



Patio party: the Chimenea from Mexico will encourage your barbecue guests to linger longer

This way you can stay out a bit longer and carry on drinking." Mr Owen first saw the stoves while touring Mexico, looking for new ideas for his other line, stone-built fireplaces. The stoves are made of terracotta and finished with an acrylic seal to prevent water seeping in. "We recommend they are put away in a garage or shed for the winter. The Mexicans say they are frost-proof, but I don't know how much they know about our frost."

They come in two sizes – one just over 3ft high at £194, the other just under 4ft high at £244 – and in a choice of three colour glazes: moss green, charcoal and mocha. A stand is provided and the price includes VAT and delivery.

Meanwhile Big K, the charcoal supply company, has extended its BBQ range to include an Italian-made barbecue with a chimney. No more smoke whipping back in the cook's face, or kippering everyone else in range. Made of cement, the

barbecues are delivered in the natural grey colour, but can be painted with masonry paint. The most popular choice is Mediterranean white and terracotta.

This is the first year of importing them and we sold a lot from the stand at the Ideal Home Exhibition to people looking for something different," says Big K's Chris Kleamhanous.

They are sold self-assembly, but Big K promises it's not difficult to put one together. The large pieces need cementing, for extra safety.

"They are very heavy, so you would have to give a hefty shove to get one over. They can be left outside all year, with just a new coat of paint in the spring to freshen up."

They cost from £300, depending on size, and all three models come with a chrome-plated grill. The smallest is 198cm high (about 6ft), the medium 210 cm and the large 230cm. While they're not cheap, they won't rust and it would have to be a very determined burglar who could lift it.

Also new for the garden is a selection of brass Indian lanterns sold through the Stiffkey Lampshop in Norfolk. They come in paraffin, low-voltage electric, or night light candle versions. Shown here is the new brass Star Lantern, which is lit by tea lights and comes with a screw-on hook bracket so it can be hung from a bamboo pole in the garden, or in tubes. It costs £12.50 plus £1.50 p&p.

Teak Antiquity, a Kent-based furniture importer, sells unusual indoor and outdoor furniture made from reclaimed and redundant farming equipment in Thailand. It's unlike any other garden furniture you'll have seen. Ploughs, old cart wheels and oxen yokes are recycled into furniture by workers out there and shipped to the UK. Kevin Mack, a consulting engineer, travels to Thailand every month to scour the country looking for old, unused equipment.

He got the idea for the company after bringing back some pieces for

personal use and finding all his friends wanted the same. He spent a year researching the potential sales market before setting up the business and finding a design partner in Thailand. Most of the pieces come from the northern provinces in Thailand and are of Burmese teak, when the workers were able to forest it, so it's already seasoned.

They can be left out over winter and the company supplies information on methods of treatment. You can access the firm on the Internet. Delivery can take between eight and 12 weeks. One of the most popular and striking pieces is the Cartwheel Bench, which costs £399 plus delivery.

Meanwhile anyone who has eaten in an outdoor cafe in France in chilly weather will remember with gratitude the gas-fired patio heaters: a kind of flying saucer on a pole. West Country company Continental Awnings make and sell them for £754 each, including VAT and delivery. They are run off gas or butane gas, adjustable so you have as much or as little heat as you need and have a self-ignition switch. They can be left outside all year.

"We can also provide Victorian-style lamps which hook round the top," says Rich Wood, "so you can see what you're eating at the same time... which may or may not be a good thing!"

The Chimenea Company, 01923 261111; Big K, 01366 500147; Stiffkey Lampshop, 01328 830460; Teak Antiquity, 01323 551855; and Web site www.teak-antiquity.com; Continental Awnings, 01803 859996.

THREE TO VIEW: WITH PERFECT PATIOS



The view from the paved terrace of Pen An Mor must be one of the most desirable in the country. The Grade II listed, four-storey Victorian town house stands on the Esplanade in the centre of Fowey in Cornwall, facing south-east across the harbour to Polruan and out to sea. The three-bedroom house was renovated eight years ago, to include a 17ft kitchen fitted with Canadian maple units and Siemens double oven, dishwasher and microwave. The drawing room has a sliding window, overhung by winter, leading out to the terrace garden. Steps from the garden lead down to the water 50 yards away, and there's a double garage that can also be used as a dinghy store. £325,000 through John D Wood (01962 863131).

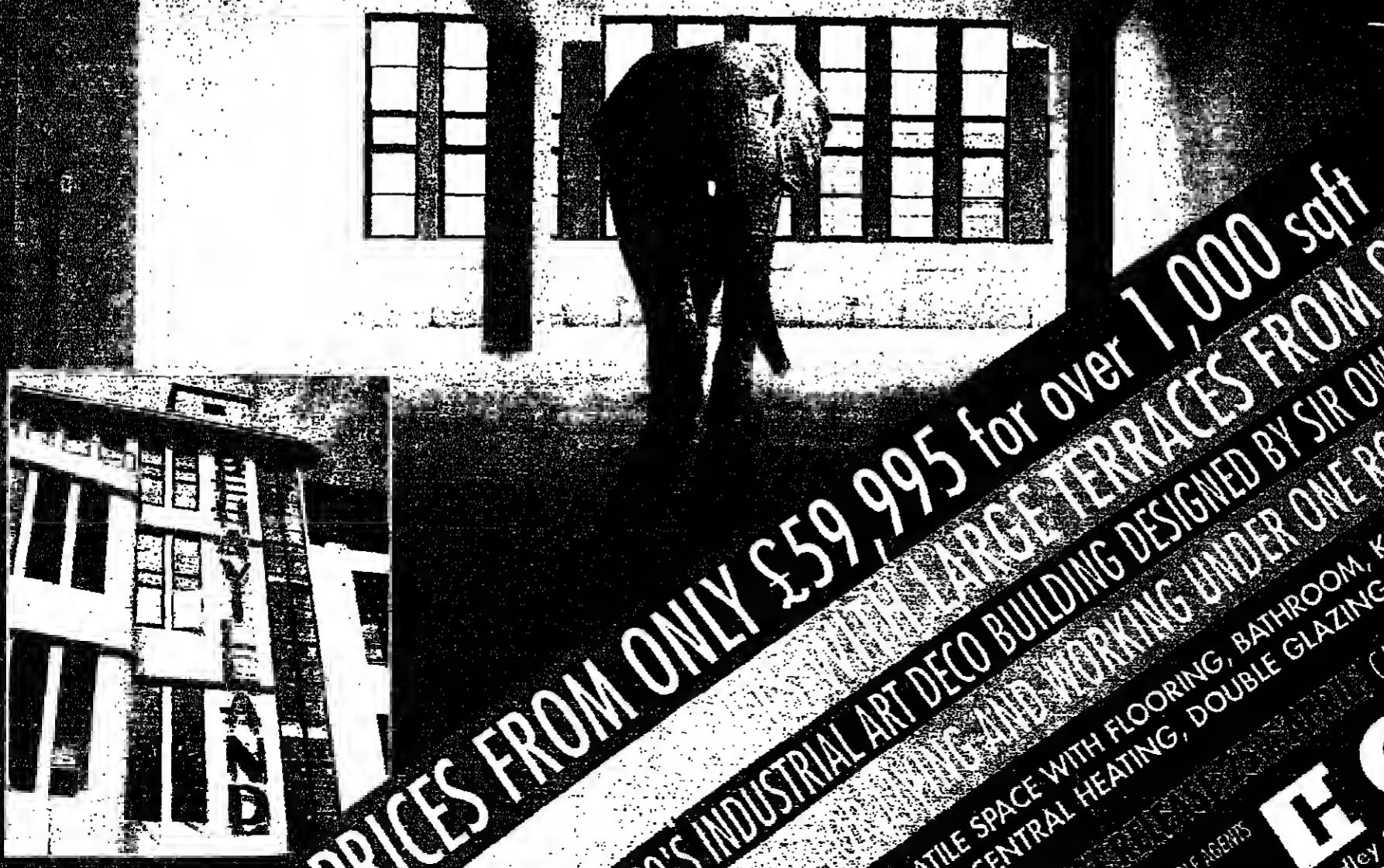


Riverside Cottage near Hawes in Wensleydale has a 12ft patio area with barbecue, stone table, fairy lights and stone flag floor. The two-reception, six-bedroom house overlooking the Widdale Beck also has a kitchen garden and a walled front garden with stone-flagged patio. There are lovely views of the River Ure and dales from the property, which has a large dining kitchen and two sitting rooms. £185,000 through GA Town & Country (01969 623451).



Cresswells is a black and white Grade II listed four-bedroom house in Osmersley, near Dronfield Spa, where most of the buildings are historic half-timbered. Its rear garden has a patio area paved with herringbone bricks and is surrounded by plants. The rest of the gardens include cobbled paved areas set into brick paths, lawns, brick-built barbecue and herbaceous borders. Inside, there's a drawing room with inglenook fireplace and wood-burning stove and beamed ceiling, sitting room, study and large kitchen. £245,000 through Allan Morris (01905 797755).

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